

2dartist

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104

Issue 104 | August 2014

47
pages of
tutorials
inside!

Create water brushes

Laura Sava explains how to generate and use custom brushes to paint an underwater scene

Explore coloring techniques

Donglu Yu demonstrates a professional approach to coloring a rendered black-and-white image

BUILD A CITY WITH TEXTURES

Tomas Honz reveals techniques to quickly construct a painterly primal city in Photoshop

+plus

- 10 of the best digital images
- Keep a sketch diary
- Learn to paint atmospheric scenes
- Design an artificial lighting set-up
- and much more!

Mastering character art

Will Murai talks about creating characters and shares the secrets of his coloring process

Editor's Letter



JESS SERJENT-TIPPING
Deputy Editor

Welcome to the August issue of *2dartist* magazine!

Color plays an important role in the digital painting process; when it's selected and used effectively, it can help describe mood and evoke emotions. We have a whole host of artists to show you how to do just that!

This month we speak to master of color and characters, Will Murai, who reveals his coloring process and the secrets to his signature style. Donglu Yu presents top tips to turn a black-and-white image into a colored masterpiece, while Byzwa Dher shares an insight behind one of his atmospheric landscapes.

We also have an array of helpful tutorials and insightful articles from industry professionals to get you inspired. Enjoy!

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Contributors



IVAN KHOMENKO

Ivan Khomenko is a 22-year-old freelance concept artist from Russia, currently working as a freelance concept designer at One Pixel Brush. He talks to us about how he became a concept artist.



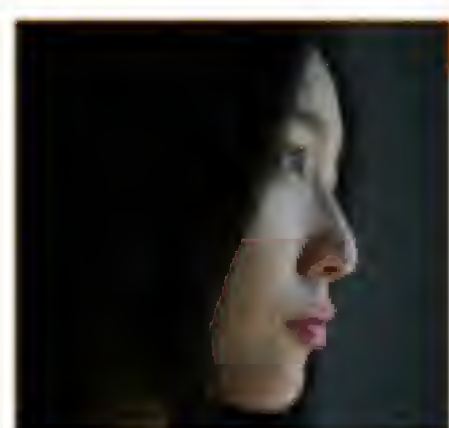
WILL MURAI

Will is a Brazilian-Japanese illustrator and concept artist living in Brazil. He has worked on different projects from comic books to videogames. He enjoys developing his fantasy art skills, working mainly for *Magic: The Gathering*.



BYZWA DHER

Byz a.k.a. Byzwa Dher is a freelance digital artist from Slovakia. He specializes in concept art and illustration for characters and environments. He shares the process behind one of his landscape images.



DONGLU YU

Donglu Yu is a senior concept artist working at Ubisoft Montreal. She has worked on game titles such as *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, *Assassin's Creed III*, *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* and *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*.



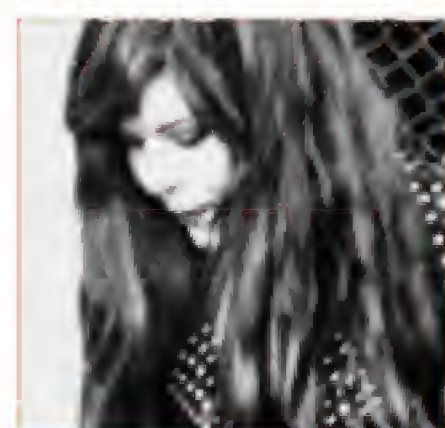
NACHO YAGÜE

Nacho Yagüe is a concept artist in the videogame industry who has worked on projects such as *Splinter Cell: Blacklist* and the upcoming *Assassin's Creed Unity*. He currently works at Ubisoft Toronto (Canada).



TOMAS HONZ

Tomas is a freelance artist from Prague. He mostly works on traditional oil paintings, but also saves a big place in his heart for digital painting, which he confesses will always be his secret love.



LAURA SAVA

Laura Sava is a freelance illustrator from Romania, whose work up until now includes book covers and illustrations for games. Laura is currently illustrating game cards for Applibot's *Legend of the Cryptids*.



MICHEL DONZÉ

Michel Donzé is a French freelance illustrator/concept artist. He studied 3D animation and VFX at Georges Méliès School and has previously worked for Ubisoft Paris, Applibot and macrograph.



DON SEEGMILLER

Don Seegmiller is a successful artist, author, and instructor. He is faculty at Utah Valley University in Orem, UT and co-ordinates the Illustration Program for the Art and Visual Communication Department.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT TO 2DARTIST?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: jess@3dtotal.com.

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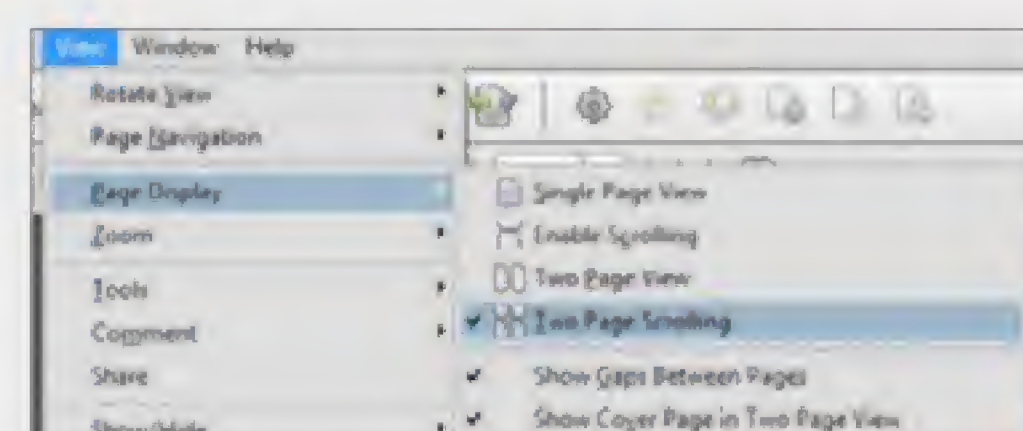
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For optimum viewing of the magazine, it is recommended that you have the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader installed. You can download it for free here: [DOWNLOAD](#)

To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2dartist magazine, you can set the reader to display "two-up", which will show double-page spreads as one large landscape image:

1. Open the magazine in Reader;
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3. Select **Two Page Scrolling**, making sure that **Show Cover Page in Two Page View** is also selected.



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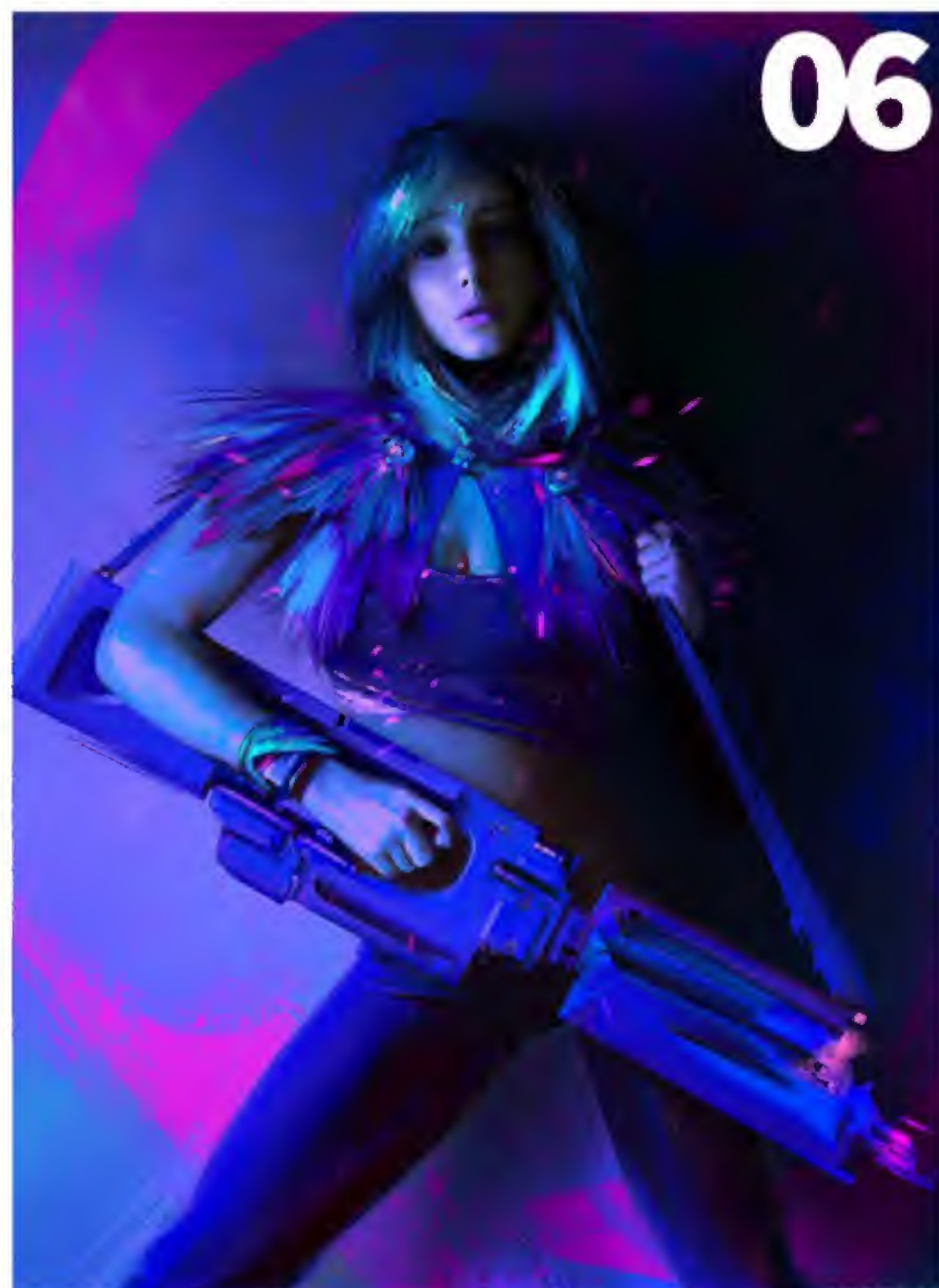
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The Artist



Ivan Khomenko

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Interviewed by:

Jess Serjent-Tipping

Ivan Khomenko is a 22-year-old from Russia, currently working as a freelance concept designer working at One Pixel Brush.

Get started as a concept artist

One Pixel Brush freelance concept designer, Ivan Khomenko, discusses how he altered his career path to become a concept artist, and the processes he uses to continue his growth as a professional artist ▶

Having recently graduated with a Major in Jewelry Design, Russian freelance concept artist, Ivan Khomenko owes thanks to the guy who cut him off in the embassy, which led his career in a new direction and changed his life...

Ivan used to participate in special programs that allowed students to travel to the USA and work for a whole summer as a housekeeper or waiter, which he had a great time doing. But in the fateful summer of 2012, at the very last moment Ivan didn't get his visa, so he had to spend a whole summer at home. At a loss with what he was going to do with all his free time, it was then he found an interest and started experimenting with Photoshop, and it was the best thing that ever happened to him. Ivan went on to land his first job as a concept designer for the game *Outrise* and since joined the team at One Pixel Brush. We chat with Ivan about his growing career and what to expect from him next!

2dartist: What was it about the digital tools that made you want to pursue a career in the industry?

"I mostly try to avoid monotony in my work, not only in terms of style or mood but also in terms of workflow or tools that I'm using. It's always fun to experiment with new stuff"

Ivan Khomenko: I'm not sure if it was digital tools that made me to want to pursue a career in this industry. To be honest, I'm still not sure if I have a career because my experience is so limited. I've always considered myself more as a hobbyist, and it's only since in the last couple of months that I've worked for One Pixel Brush that I started getting an idea of what this industry is all about.

I know this is definitely a great place to be, and it's really difficult for me to imagine any work better than concept design work. Also, if I become good enough, I'll have the opportunity to work abroad, which is a huge motivation to get into this industry.

2da: What is your biggest source of inspiration? Is there a particular style, mood or scene that you are drawn to?

IK: I guess like every artist I get inspired just by looking at things. For example, a photo of a dramatic cliff can give an idea for a concept and all you have to do is just add some interesting structures or a spaceship (and don't forget about a little person to show the scale).

Also, I really like to look at works by artists such as Ilya Repin, Isaac Levitan, and John Singer Sargent too. It's amazing how much you can learn just by looking at their work, especially in terms of colors, because they all painted from life so these are true

colors. Photos can't tell you nearly as much as these artists' work.

About style, I don't really have any particular style or mood I favor. I mostly try to avoid monotony in my work, not only in terms of style or mood but also in terms of workflow or tools that I'm using. It's always fun to experiment with new stuff.

2da: Could you choose one of your favorite past images (that you've created) and explain a little about its creation, and why it's your favorite?

IK: Recently I did a piece called the *Acid Planet*. I like this particular image because I managed to achieve every goal that I set for myself during its creation. All I wanted was just a simple concept with a 3D spaceship created in a single day.

In my opinion, when you put yourself in a situation when you have particular conditions of work or simple time limits it becomes much more interesting and challenging to work on it, and helps you understand how good a concept artist you are. Then after you finish and you are happy with the result (which is a very rare thing for me) this concept becomes not only another piece for your portfolio, but also a reminder of your little achievement at some point. This is pretty much how I manage most of my personal stuff – it's all just another assignment to me. ►

● Ivan was practicing with simple shapes and symmetrical composition in *Albino* © Ivan Khomenko





● Here, Ivan combined 3D and 2D to create a 3D model of a spaceship in MODO, then finished the image in Photoshop © Ivan Khomenko



● Ivan's goal here was to create a dynamic film key frame © Ivan Khomenko



● One of Ivan's first experiments using photo textures in his work © Ivan Khomenko



2da: Do you have any favorite software, techniques or processes that you apply to your artwork, that you would consider your signature style?

IK: I'm absolutely sure that I don't have a particular style or anything like that – I think my art at the moment is just faceless – I can't even call it 'art', it's just a set of work that shows that I'm able to do this

kind of environment, or do this kind of character, or use this particular software in my pipeline.

Speaking of software, aside from Photoshop, I'm using MODO, DAZ, Marvelous Designer, and anything that helps to get the job done as quickly as possible. Of course my favorite is Photoshop, but as I go forward MODO becomes more and more useful. Also,

I really like the photo-bashing technique – it's just the fastest way of working, especially when you have short deadlines.

2da: Are there any areas in the digital art world that you'd like to branch into (and why)? ►



■ This misty forest image was created with textures to create a realistic effect © Ivan Khomenko



■ This was a quick photo-bashing exercise © Ivan Khomenko

“I’m doing experiments all the time – almost every personal work that I do is less about the unique idea, and more about just experimenting in terms of workflow or using new tools”

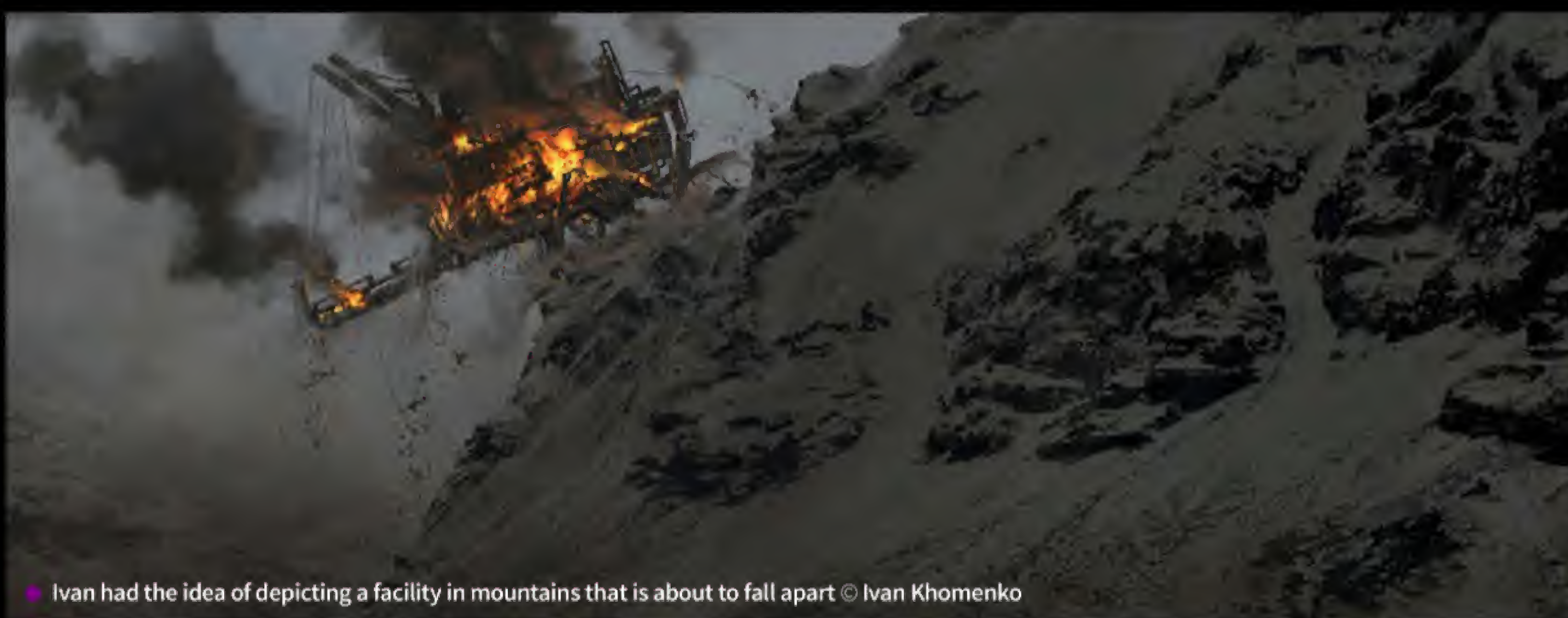
IK: Maybe someday I’ll try to get into matte painting a bit. I’m sure it’s a very difficult thing to do. Aside

from excellent knowledge of Photoshop and a huge reference library, you’d better have tons of patience and be ready to paint with a one pixel brush for hours. But in the end, I’m sure you could learn a lot of techniques and tricks that will help you to be better at concept design, so it’s definitely worth a try.

2da: Do you ever practice CG/digital arts as a hobby and experiment with techniques and tools in your own personal artwork? If not, how else do you

spend your free time away from the demands and deadlines of the creative industry?

IK: I’m doing experiments all the time – almost every personal work that I do is less about the unique idea, and more about just experimenting in terms of workflow or using new tools. If I see cool work from my favorite artist, first I’ll look at it for hours and then I’ll just try to do something like this using a similar technique. Yeah, I know how it sounds – but it’s just ►



● Ivan spent quite a bit of time creating this background image for the *Outrise* project © Ivan Khomenko



the way I work and the way I learn things. Maybe someday I'll be more satisfied with my skill and I'll do some personal projects, trying to create something unique; but for now I'm just learning.

Unfortunately I don't have much free time, but when I'm getting sick of my room or my eyes starts to bleed I just go outside, take a walk and try to think about anything but concept art. Yep, I have such a boring life indeed.

2da: What has been your favorite commission/project to work on so far and why?

IK: I've only worked on one project so far, called *Outrise*, and all the stuff I've done at One Pixel Brush I can't talk about. So *Outrise* is my favorite. Also because it was my first experience as a concept designer, and before that I wasn't even sure that I was fit for this kind of job and I didn't know whether I would come up with something good at all. But in the end everything went well, my boss and creator of this project, James Wearing, was pretty much happy with the result, so at this point all of my doubt faded away and I finally decided to be a concept designer.

2da: If you could give future digital artists just one piece of advice on working in the industry, what would it be?

IK: I guess I'll sound a bit rough, but I think if you really want to be in this industry you have to do three things: work your ass off (I mean at least 12-14 hours a day), manage your day properly, and give up your social life for a couple of years. The more time you spend on it, the faster results you get, so everything is pretty simple. If you're not ready for it, just forget about it and get a regular job.

2da: Finally, what can we expect to see from you in the future?

IK: In the meantime, I'm so hooked up on 3D and I'm planning on integrating more 3D elements in my work. For example right now, I'm experimenting with MODO replicators and the technique Scott Robertson came up with. I'm also messing around with the Mesh Fusion plug-in for MODO, which is an awesome tool if you're not comfortable with regular subdivision modeling. So mostly I'll be practicing combining 3D and 2D techniques in the hopes that it'll help me in the future.

I really like this industry because you'll never get to the point when you think that you're done and you know everything. There is always something new to learn and so it's exciting for me that every day the work just gets better. ●



● Ivan used this piece to explore colors and shapes © Ivan Khomenko

ESCAPE STUDIOS



The Dark Knight Rises © Warner Bros. Pictures

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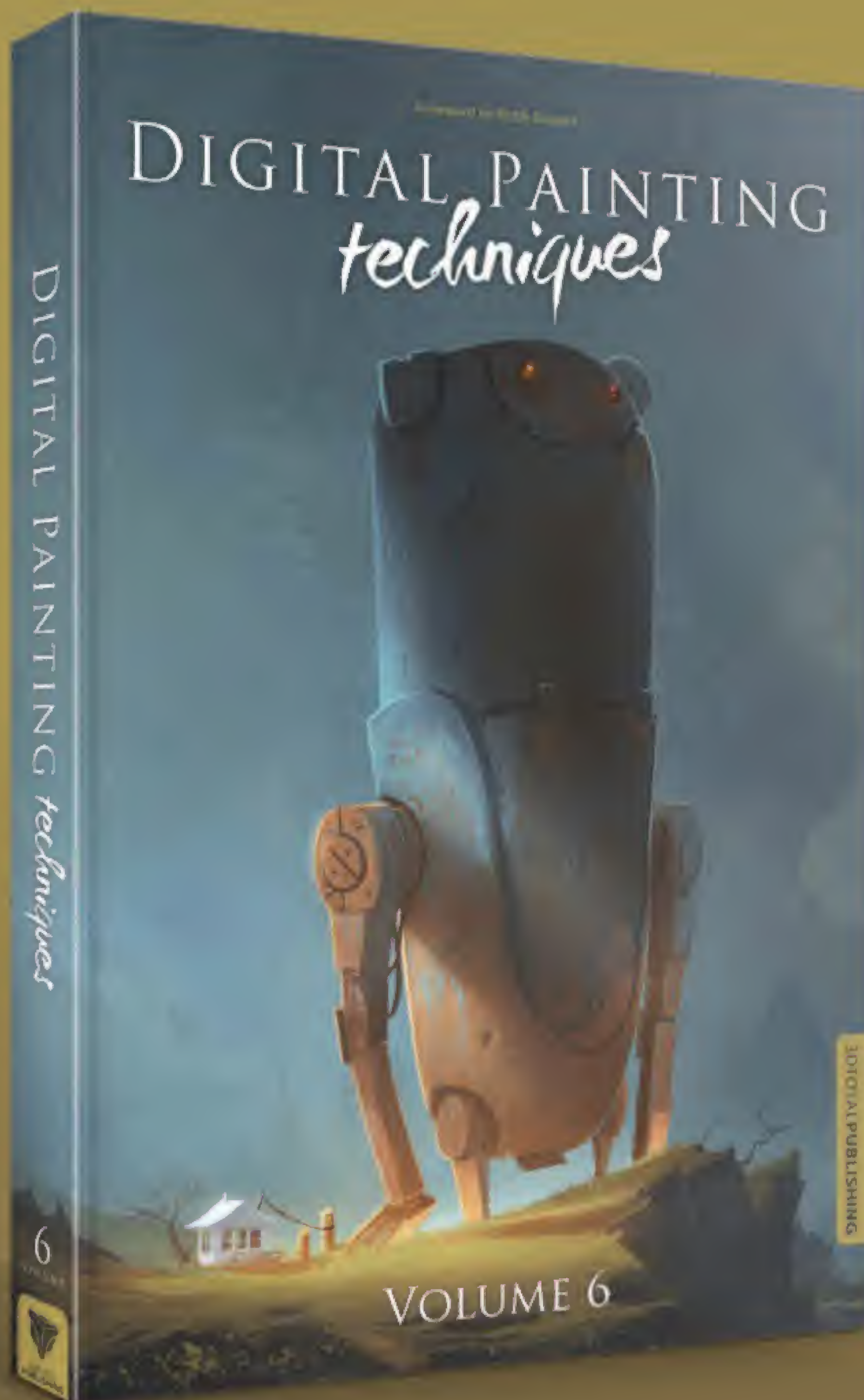
Victor worked on the Batman vs. Bane fight scenes

“I’ve had the opportunity to work with some of the top VFX studios within the world and oh boy, I’m having fun; it’s what I’ve always dreamed of doing.”

VICTOR, NUKE SENSEI
Senior Digital Compositor and VFX Tutor

escapestudios.com/enterandescape

DIGITAL PAINTING *techniques* VOLUME 6



Brush up on the latest digital painting techniques with the sixth volume of this essential series for any digital artist.

"The latest edition of Digital Painting Techniques is a wonderful collection of tutorials, giving unique insight into the creative processes of many industry-leading artists. It will be a great addition to any creative's reference library, professional and novice alike. Well worth checking out!"

Derek Stenning, Concept Artist and Illustrator, www.borninconcrete.com

Now in its sixth year, *Digital Painting Techniques: Volume 6* continues the tradition of showcasing the latest digital painting trends and techniques, from industry experts including Carlos Cabrera (Applibot) and Jan Urschel (Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag). In this latest volume, artists will learn about the development of character moods, creating fantasy battles and environments, building sci-fi worlds, and the fundamental aspects of lighting and atmosphere, forming another great addition to any artist's shelf.

This book is the perfect resource for:

- Matte painters and concept artists for the TV, film, and game industries
- Lecturers and students teaching/studying fine art courses where they are starting to embrace digital painting as a valuable medium
- 3D artists who want to improve their texture painting and backdrop paintings
- Photographers who want to branch out and use Photoshop for more than just corrections and touch-ups
- Hobbyists who want to learn useful tips and tricks from the best artists in the industry

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The Artist



Will Murai

willmurai.com

Interviewed by:

Jess Serjent-Tipping

Will is a Brazilian-Japanese illustrator and concept artist living in São Paulo, Brazil. He has worked on a lot of different projects from comic books to videogames. Today he enjoys developing his fantasy art skills, working mainly for *Magic: The Gathering*.

Mastering character art

Brazilian-Japanese illustrator and concept artist, Will Murai, has produced colorful and striking characters for many top clients. Will talks about creating characters for comics and games, as well as sharing the secrets of his coloring process and signature style ▶

Will Murai is a talented digital artist and illustrator, whose illustrations are perfectly executed and quite amazing! He has worked for many well known clients, including the big shots – Marvel Comics, DC Comics, ESPN Magazine, Condé Nast and Marie Claire Magazine – as well as prestigious studios such as Ubisoft, Crytek, Applibot, Marvel and Wizards of the Coast.

We invite you to discover the colorful (influenced by the Brazilian culture) and pretty epic illustrations of Will Murai, as he discusses his career and techniques.

2dartist: Hi Will, thanks for chatting with 2dartist today! First, could you tell our readers a little bit about yourself and your background in digital art? Where did it all begin?

Will Murai: Thanks for the opportunity to show my work! I was born and raised in a small town in south-eastern Brazil, far away from any relevant artistic kind of scene.

Since I was a kid, I've always loved comic books, anime and cartoons. I was very obsessed with trying to replicate my favorite characters, so I decided to start taking drawing lessons in a small school in my hometown, Mogi das Cruzes.

My first experience with digital art was back in 2001, when Rodrigo and Raphael, both sons of my drawing teacher, showed me how to use Photoshop to color my drawings. They ran through the whole process of coloring comic books: inking using a light table, scanning it, making masks, building custom palettes and then rendering it using an airbrush and gradient tools. It was amazing because that was my first introduction to digital art.

2da: What was it about the digital tools that made you want to pursue a career in the industry?

WM: Everything changed when I got my hands on my first tablet. Before that, I used to color my drawings using the mouse, gradient tools and masks. The results always ended up very artificial and plastic.

However, using the tablet, I could transfer my style and techniques to the digital medium more precisely. It was easier and a much more pleasurable process. I started making better images and my digital artwork evolved really quickly, which got some client's attention, resulting in commissions. Not that I planned to become a professional – I just enjoyed the whole thing and got lucky enough to be noticed by some people!

2da: Where do you draw your inspiration from? What influences your work and motivates you?



Will created *Bunny* as a personal illustration © Will Murai

PRO TIP

Be professional

Everybody that enters this journey has a soul of an artist. But in order to deliver better illustrations that fulfill a certain project specification, you have to be more pragmatic about it. It is crucial to deliver beautiful images that are also functional, so that finding the perfect balance between the creativity and professionalism is really important.

A project, by definition, has limited resources and time to be executed. In order to accomplish all your objectives as a character, environment, or concept artist, you have to know about your project, understand the 'problems' you were hired to solve, and research about how you go about solving it.

This design approach will give you enough material to unleash all your artistic skills to make beautiful functional images.

WM: I am definitely influenced by the golden age of American illustration. The work of Norman Rockwell and JC Leyendecker are my greatest inspiration. It's interesting how they could turn commissions from a magazine cover into timeless

pieces of art, and some of the most influential bodies of work any illustrator could ever accomplish.

Something that really fulfills me is when my work helps create an emotional connection between the ►



Will Murray



● This pin-up illustration was made for the 38th anniversary of *Playboy Magazine*, Brazil © Will Murai

- This fantasy warrior illustration was made for the *Magic: The Gathering* expansion pack, *Theros* © Wizards of the Coast LLC



audience and the project I helped give shape to. I definitely have fun painting and creating for my own sake, but creating a character for a game, painting a poster or developing a pitching image is what really gets me out of bed in the morning!

2da: Could you choose one of your favorite past images (that you've created) and explain a little about its creation, and why it's your favorite?

WM: Definitely the illustration I created in 2007, *Carmen Rocks*. In this piece, I am showing Carmen Miranda, who was a Portuguese-Brazilian actress that was very famous around the 50s for introducing the world to traditional Brazilian music and

“I guess I am mostly known by the strong use of colors in my work. It may be influenced from the Brazilian culture, sunny weather and colorful landscapes!”

iconography. Her presence on the stage was always surrounded by samba, colorful clothing, native fruits and tropicalism, which made her one of the greatest exporters of the Brazilian image. I wanted to give this image a twist, showing her in a more rock 'n roll and less classic way, using a style that is somehow a mix of classic pin-up paintings with other influences such as comic books and manga.

This illustration ended up being featured in many magazines, and is one of my best-seller prints.

Fun fact: it's also my most 'used without authorization' piece throughout the world.

2da: Do you have any favorite software, techniques or processes that you apply to your artwork, that you would consider your signature style?

WM: Photoshop is the tool of my trade. The technique that I have been using, and that has proved to be very efficient to me, is painting in grayscale and then applying color afterwards. ►

🕒 Artist Timeline Will's career up to this point

2004: Graduated in Graphic Design

2005: First important gig working as a comic book colorist for the *Incredible HULK* issue#85, by Marvel comics

2007: The year Will left the Colorist job and started working as an Illustrator in fields like advertising, publishing and games. He also painted *Carmen Rocks*, one of his most famous illustrations

2008: Started working as a 2D artist at Ubisoft Brazil

2009: Became lead artist at Ubisoft Brazil

2011: Started working with Wizards of the Coast on the most famous card game in the world: *Magic: The Gathering*

2012: The first Magic Card painted by Will was released. It was a reinterpretation of one of the most famous MTG cards, *Brainstorm*

2013: He was invited by *Playboy Magazine* to paint its famous classic pin-up bunny for its 38th anniversary special issue

2013: Will visited Japan to sign cards in a *Magic: The Gathering* tournament

2014: *Arena of Fate*, Will's first project together with Crytek is announced









● Will's illustration *Prime Speaker Zegana* was made for the *Magic: The Gathering* expansion pack, *Gatecrash* © Wizards of the Coast LLC

I start by laying down the shapes, always searching for dynamic and interesting compositions, and also balancing the values and contrast. Only when I am happy with it, I add flavor, context and ambience with colors. This way I limit the number of variables that I have to figure out in each step, leaving more space in the brain for creative solutions.

I guess I am mostly known by the strong use of colors in my work. It may be influenced by the Brazilian culture, sunny weather and colorful landscapes!

2da: Do you ever practice CG/digital arts as a hobby and experiment with techniques and tools in your own personal artwork? If not, how else do you spend your free time away from the demands and deadlines of the creative industry?

WM: Lately, I've managed to work with fewer commissions in order to optimize the timeframe that I have to deliver a particular piece. This way I have more space to experiment in the pieces that I do for commercial reasons.

I used to spend a big part of my spare time trying new techniques, but I prefer to do other activities instead. I figured out that consuming other types of entertainment also aggregates skills and intellect,

⚡ PRO TIP

Have a 'thing'

It is good to have a wide range of skills, but you gotta have a specialty, this way people will relate your work with your name easily, which is good in the competitive and global world we live in. Try to become really good at one specific genre and when a potential client needs someone to develop it for him, you will be the obvious choice: "We need someone to make this cute little monster with wings made out of candy. Of course! That guy!"

which results in a better visualization when I have to translate an art description into an illustration. I like to go to movies, museums, art shows, ride my bike in the streets of São Paulo, and skateboard a little.

2da: What would be your perfect project to work on?

WM: I'd love to work with Brad Bird. I am such a big fan of his movies and it would be great to work with him on any project.

2da: What has been your favorite project to work on/greatest artistic achievement?

WM: Without a doubt, *Magic: The Gathering* has been the most rewarding project I have been part of.

I played the game when I was a kid, and although I sucked at it (still kinda do) I bought it mostly because of the artwork. After years away from the game, in 2011, Wizards of the Coast invited me to work on the expansion *Return to Ravnica*.

It is amazing, not only because I am part of something that was present in my childhood, but also for the magnitude of the community. I had the opportunity to travel around the world just to shake hands, sign cards, and see the players connecting to something I helped give shape to. I also met other amazingly talented artists that are involved in the production as well, who continue to raise the bar and inspire me to keep evolving both as an artist and as a professional. ►



● This dramatic image was made for the *Magic: The Gathering* expansion pack, *Izzet VS Golgari* © Wizards of the Coast LLC



● This eerie piece was created for the *Magic: The Gathering* expansion pack, *Journey into Nyx* © Wizards of the Coast LLC





Will's female soldier was created for the *Magic: The Gathering* expansion pack, *Gatecrash* © Wizards of the Coast LLC



“I would love to work on a movie as a character artist or concept artist. I like the challenge of making artwork that creates emotional connections with the audience”

2da: Are there any other areas in the digital art world that you'd like to branch into (and why)?

WM: As I said before, I would love to work on a movie as a character artist or concept artist. I like the challenge of making artwork that creates emotional connections with the audience. I have been able to work on some fields that are good at that, such as games and comic books, but I like the way a movie teleports the viewer to a particular universe. For a brief moment, you get into the characters, you share their fears and happiness and get to love or hate them. I would love the challenge to translate some characters back-story into a visual language in order to give the viewers a particular emotion.

2da: If you could give future digital artists just one piece of advice on working in the industry, what would it be?

PRO TIP Quality over quantity

As a freelance professional, one of the most important lessons I've learned lately is that delivering quality artwork is more important than participating in lots of different projects. At some point in your career there will be many requests from different clients wanting a piece of your skill.

However, working on fewer projects at a time enhances your focus on the problems you have to solve, at the same time leaving more space to experiment on different solutions while executing. You will ship fewer projects but they will be the best of you. That's what you want people to see!

WM: Sounds like a cliché, but you gotta love what you do. There is no money or job title in the world that fulfills an empty soul. Only love gives you the extra boost to overcome the many challenges that will inevitably appear on the path to becoming a better professional.

Also, you have to be true to yourself and your values. If you love to draw elves, monsters or cats, make sure that you are doing it at your best capacity and people will recognize it!

2da: Finally, what can we expect to see from you in the future?

WM: Hopefully, you'll be getting tired of seeing my work around everywhere!

2da: Thanks for chatting with 2dartist! ●



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DON SEEGMILLER

Sketchbook

Don Seegmiller shares his stunning pencil work, influenced by what he observes around him, dreams and half-heard conversations in public places.

The Artist



Don Seegmiller
seegmillerart.com

Don Seegmiller is a successful artist, author and instructor. He is faculty at Utah Valley University in Orem, UT and co-ordinates the Illustration Program for the Art and Visual Communication Department. His traditional oil paintings are represented in major art galleries in the United States.

Immerse yourself in the amazing doodles and drawings of Don Seegmiller...

Most of the doodles and drawings in my sketchbooks are for fun – it's about the only art that I am able to do just for fun. Sketchbooks also serve as my diaries or journals and drawing practice. Sketching is also a way that I stay focused and don't fall asleep during meetings – the longer the meeting, the better for me, because it lets me keep drawing. So I guess that there are multiple reasons why I keep a sketchbook.

My sketchbooks are often anything but a 'sketchbook'. I draw on just about anything, including paper placemats at restaurants. I do use traditional sketchbooks too, but I like the heavier cover stocks. I have several sketchbooks in use at any one time. I keep one in my pickup, one in my wife's car; basically anywhere I anticipate I might want one.

I keep every sketch and doodle I draw. If you do not keep all your work, it is very hard to see if you are getting better. Currently my sketchbooks fill a small bookcase in my studio. I am slowly trying to get everything scanned so I have digital copy along with the original. I am slightly over 8,000 scans. Many of those have multiple drawings on one page.

I am often asked if I draw much on the computer, since I do an extensive amount of digital painting. I will draw digitally occasionally but for the most part, not too much. I enjoy the feel of a pencil on paper and traditional materials are quite portable, they don't get hot, and they aren't going to run out of batteries.

Inspiration and ideas

The inspiration and ideas for my doodles come from many different sources. The most common inspiration is what I observe around me – anywhere with crowds will provide lots of good material. If I'm not drawing, then I use my cellphone camera to capture whatever happens to suit my fancy.

Reading and music are other major sources of inspiration. Other sources of inspiration are the seasons, holidays (Halloween in particular), dreams, half-heard conversations in public places; pretty much anything can be inspiring. The most important thing is to be open to and recognize inspiring moments. It doesn't matter what you draw as long as you are drawing.



01



02



03

- 01 A sketch of a friendly Alien Drog
- 02 Dinosaur: I drew this one for one of my grandsons
- 03 Trick or Treat: This sweet toddler creeps people out when they look closely

SKETCHBOOK OF DON SEEGLER

Materials

Paper: My favorite paper is cover stock that you buy in paper stores. It is heavy-weight and can be bought in a variety of colors. I mainly draw on white, gray, earth-toned, and black paper. My 'sketchbook' is usually a handful of sheets of cover stock on a clipboard.

Pencils: My favorite pencils are Prismacolor in darker colors, Prismacolor Watercolor pencils, Black PC935 and Stabilo 8046. If I am drawing on darker papers then I will use light colored Prismacolor pencils. I also use graphite pencils. They smudge around for subtle value transitions.

Pencil Sharpeners: I use small manual handheld sharpeners if I don't want to make any noise. I don't really have a favorite but buy good quality sharpeners. I have an El Casco gold pencil sharpener that is my favorite hand sharpener. It sharpens pencils beautifully. My favorite pencil sharpener is battery operated and cost about \$12 at Office Depot.

Mechanical Pencils: I occasionally use mechanical pencils in small sketchbooks. They take too much effort to draw larger sketches.

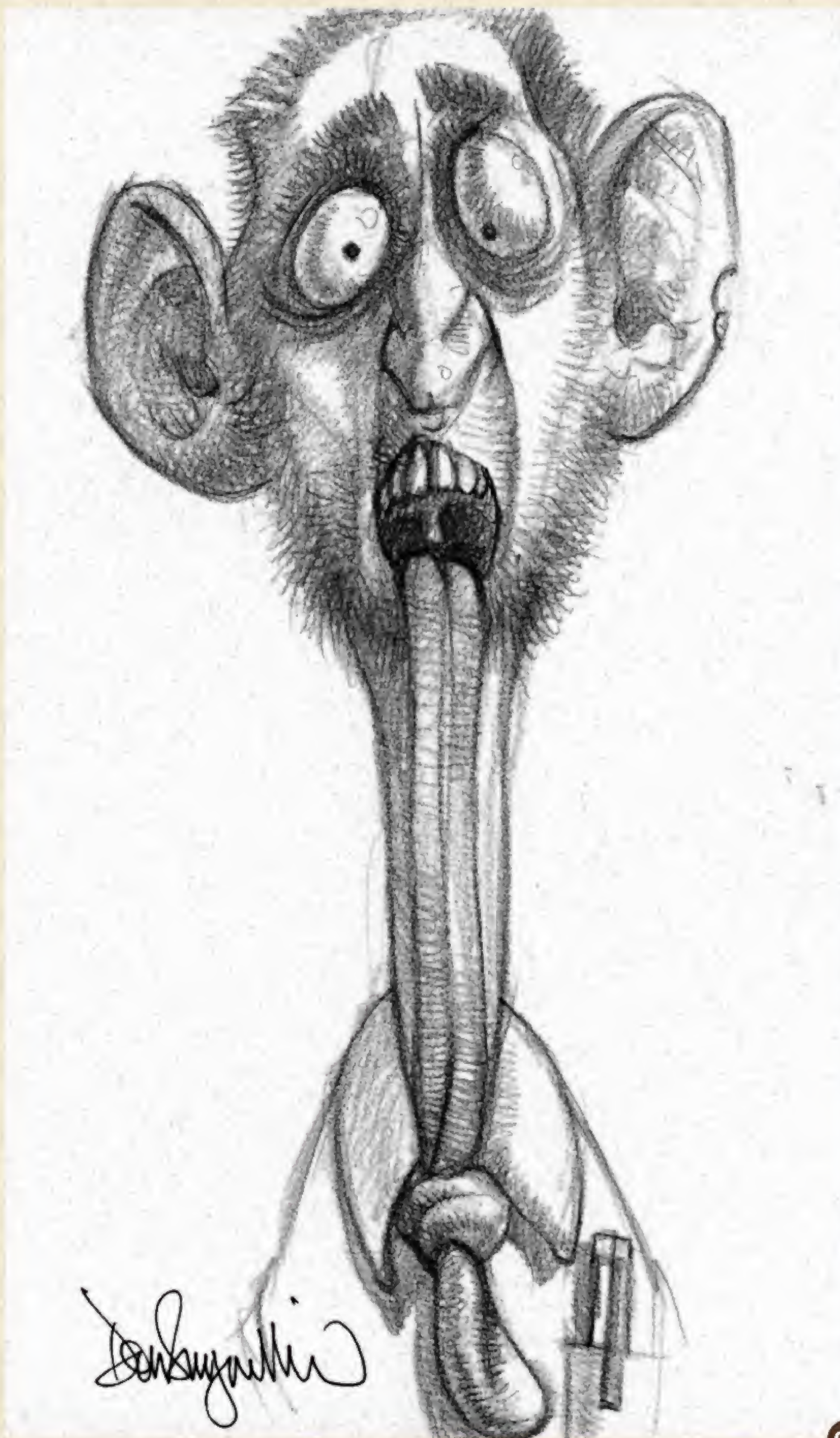
Pens: I love to draw with good quality ball point pens. I find them very expressive with a tonal range similar to graphite pencils.

Markers: I am using Copic markers more and more in my sketches these days. I use just the gray value markers.

Erasers: As a general rule I do not erase. Erasing breaks the flow of the sketch. If not careful, soon the work becomes more about erasing and making corrections than drawing. Prismacolor and Stabilo pencils are impossible to cleanly erase. When drawing with graphite I will use kneaded erasers. They are a part of the drawing process and not usually as erasers alone.

Sketching techniques

I don't have a set-in-stone sketching technique I use. The method I use to draw is mostly determined by the medium I use. Generally though, when drawing with pencils of any kind, I grip the pencil between my thumb and finger with the length of the pencil in the palm of my hand. I then draw with the edge of the lead and rotate the pencil as I draw. I get a great deal of control over the medium this way and also keep the tool sharp. When I want more precision I will switch to the traditional way to hold a pencil.





05

04 *Tongue Tied:* How every one of us has felt at one time or another

05 *Cuddly?:* Just a strange creature. Is he friend or foe?

06 *Viking Clown:* Sometimes just combining unrelated things leads to some good ideas



06

⚡ PRO TIP

Experiment with your drawing materials

Draw with a wide range of different materials when you are starting out. Over time you will naturally gravitate to the materials that you are most comfortable with. Never quit experimenting though. You never know when you may be asked to draw on a napkin with a crayon to sell a client an idea.

07 *Lenny*: I was watching the TV show *Oddities*, when this customer walked in. He found a strait-jacket and was very happy. I just had to draw him

08 *Frankenstein* started as a zombie and later developed into the original undead character, Frankenstein

09 *Ambush*. The title says it all

10 *Goblin*: A drawing of a goblin rock formation found in Goblin Valley, a Utah State Park. The original photo is also shown to the right



07



08



09



10



Don Suganlin

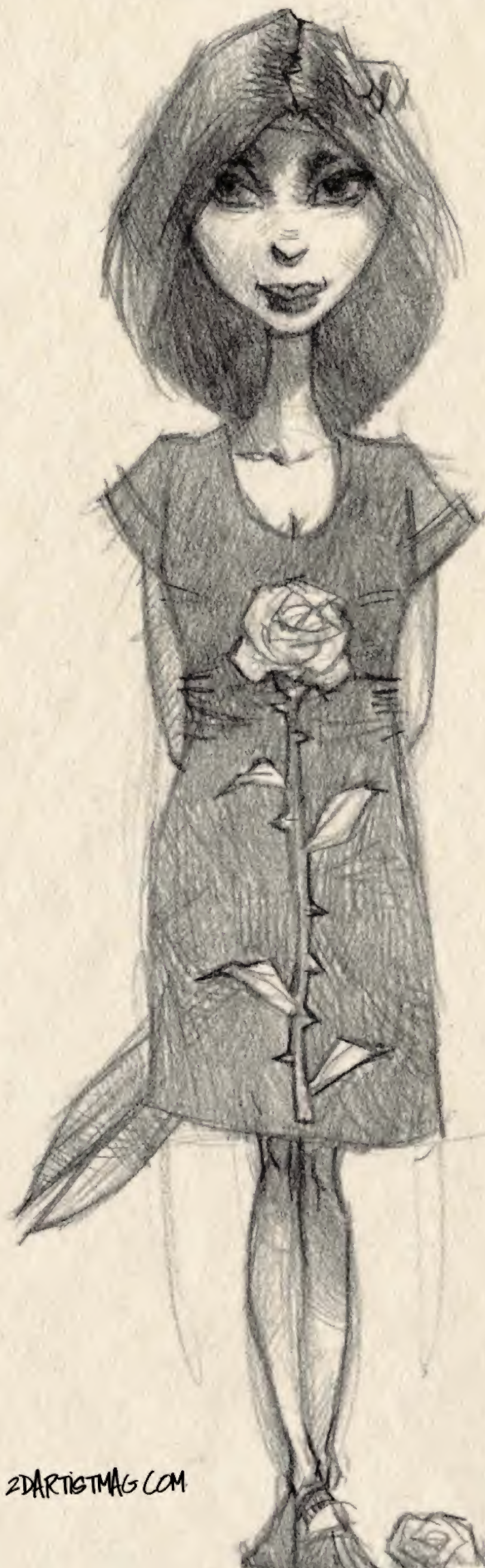


11 *Good Doggy:* Did you know that the majority of missing dead bodies are found by the family dog? Imagine going out the front door one morning and finding Fido gnawing on a treat he found in the woods

12 *Blowing Hair* is just an exercise in drawing some stylized hair

13 *Just One of those days.* We've all had them.

Don Seegler



⚡ PRO TIP

Draw like you are practicing to run a marathon

If your goal was to be a professional musician or play sports professionally, you would start practicing at a very young age. You would spend hours each day refining your skills. Why then do we think that we do not need to spend a similar amount of effort to become a professional artist? Drawing is fundamental to so many different creative fields. Whatever your professional artistic goal may be, if you can draw better than the next guy, you will get the job, sell the painting, illustrate the comic, or develop the concept.



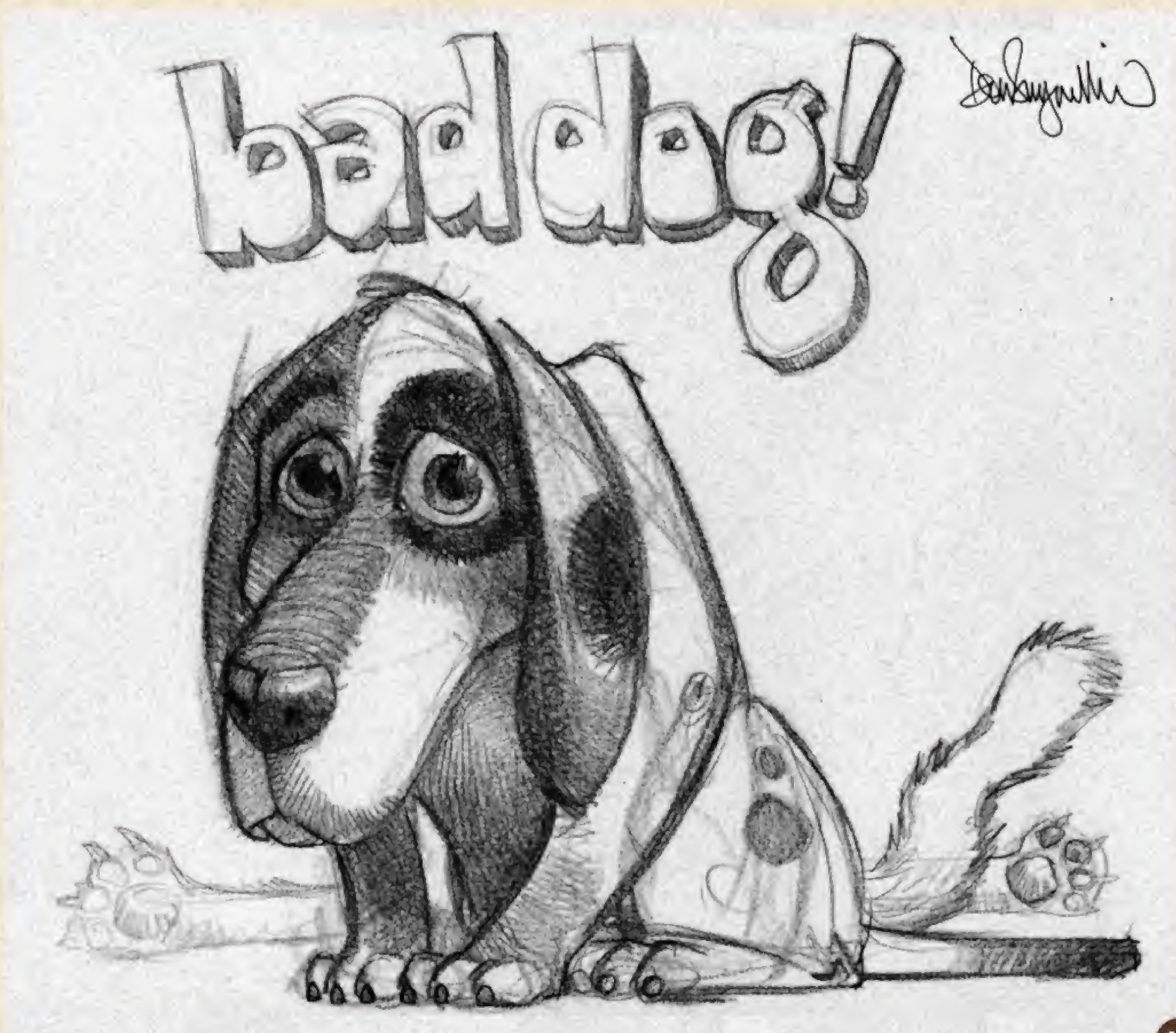


14 *The Florist:* She simply cannot tolerate flowers prettier than herself

15 *Balloon Man:* Not a care in the world

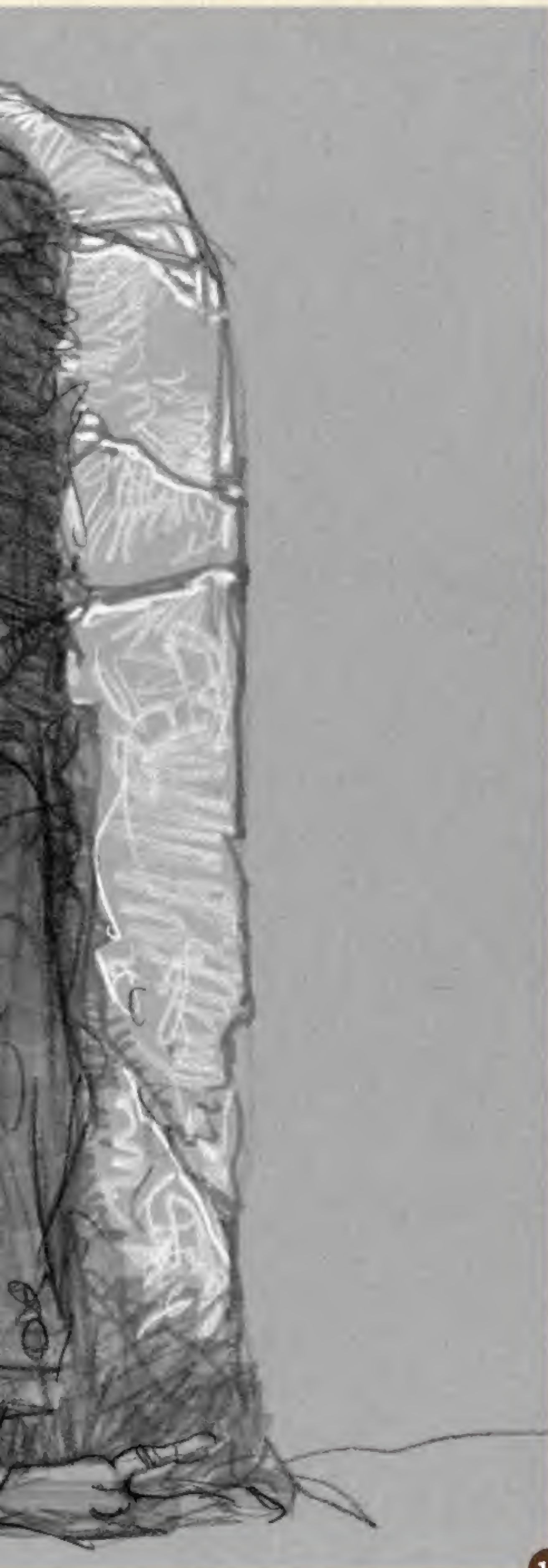
16 *Bad Dog:* The drawing needs no explanation

15



16

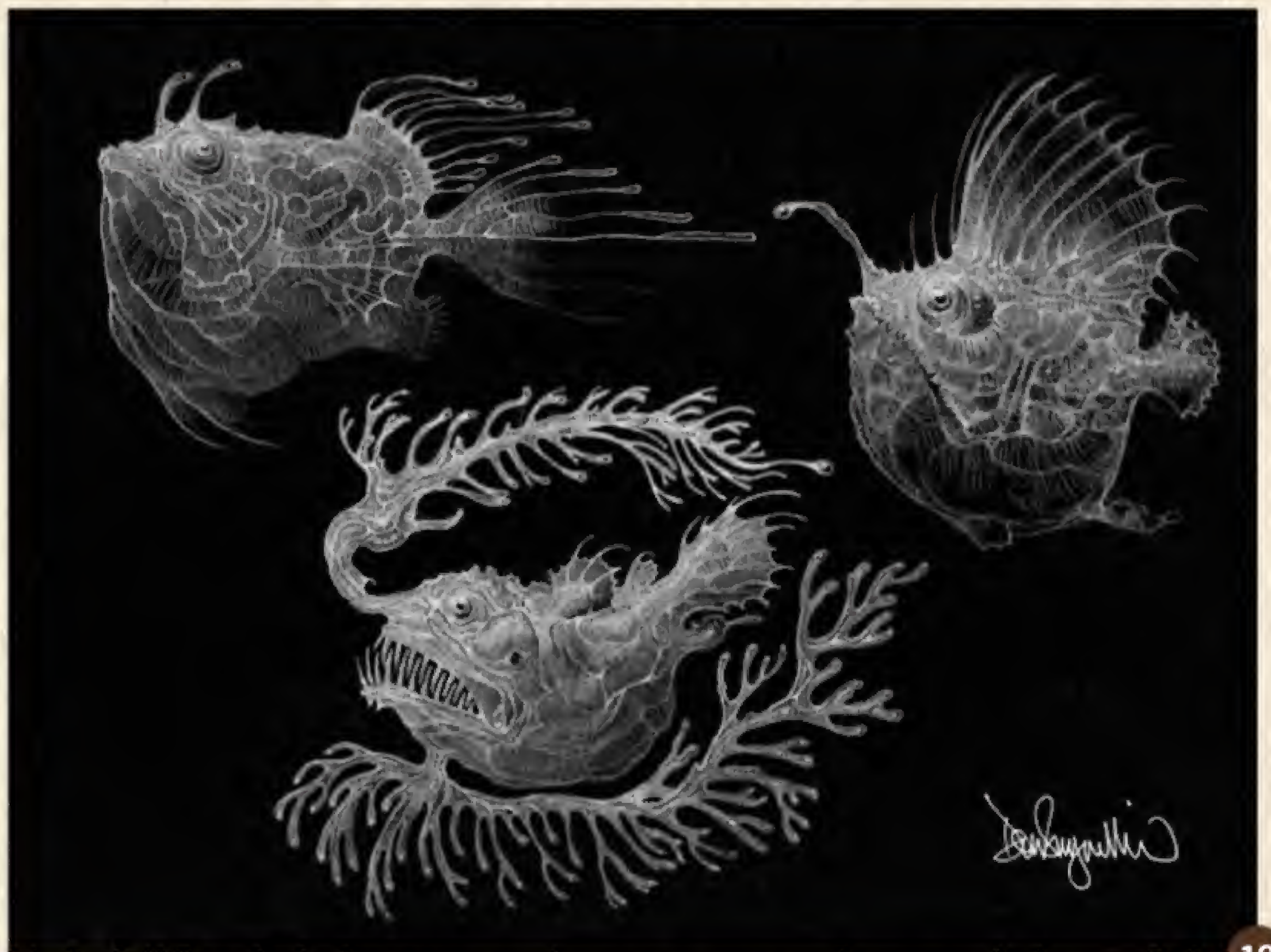




17



18



19

17 *Vampire on a Binge:* He attended the wrong blood drive

18 *Deep Sea Fish:* White pencil on black paper

19 *Exotic Bird:* Some watercolor pencil used in this sketch

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We look forward to hearing from you!

Image - Khalid Al-Muharraqi



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Khalid Al-Muharraqi is an artist in every sense of the word—it runs in his family. Khalid and his father Abdulla Al-Muharraqi were recently honored with a father and son art exhibit in Bahrain, opened by His Royal Highness, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain. LightWave 3D is essential software for Khalid's craft—transforming ideas into art that is revered worldwide.

"LightWave 3D is the tool that helps me create the images in my head. I use a variety of 3D applications, but LightWave 3D is always the backbone of my work. It has tools that make sense to me and allow me to reach my artistic goals." - Khalid Al-Muharraqi

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Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!



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Krystian Biskup

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Web: salierr.artstation.com

Submit your images! Simply email jess@3dtotal.com





Mech

Alex Ichim

Year created: 2014

Web: alexichim.artstation.com







Maschinen Project 04

Ignacio Fernández Ríos

Year created: 2014

Web: artstation.com/artist/Pencracker



Brella

Piotr Jabłoński aka nicponim

Year created: 2014

Web: facebook.com/nicponimsky





Dice

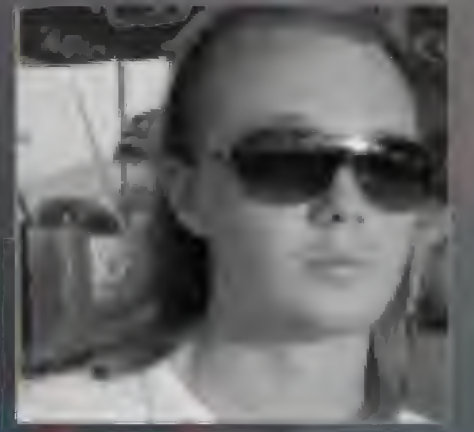
Kait Kybar

Year created: 2014

Web: kaitkybar.com

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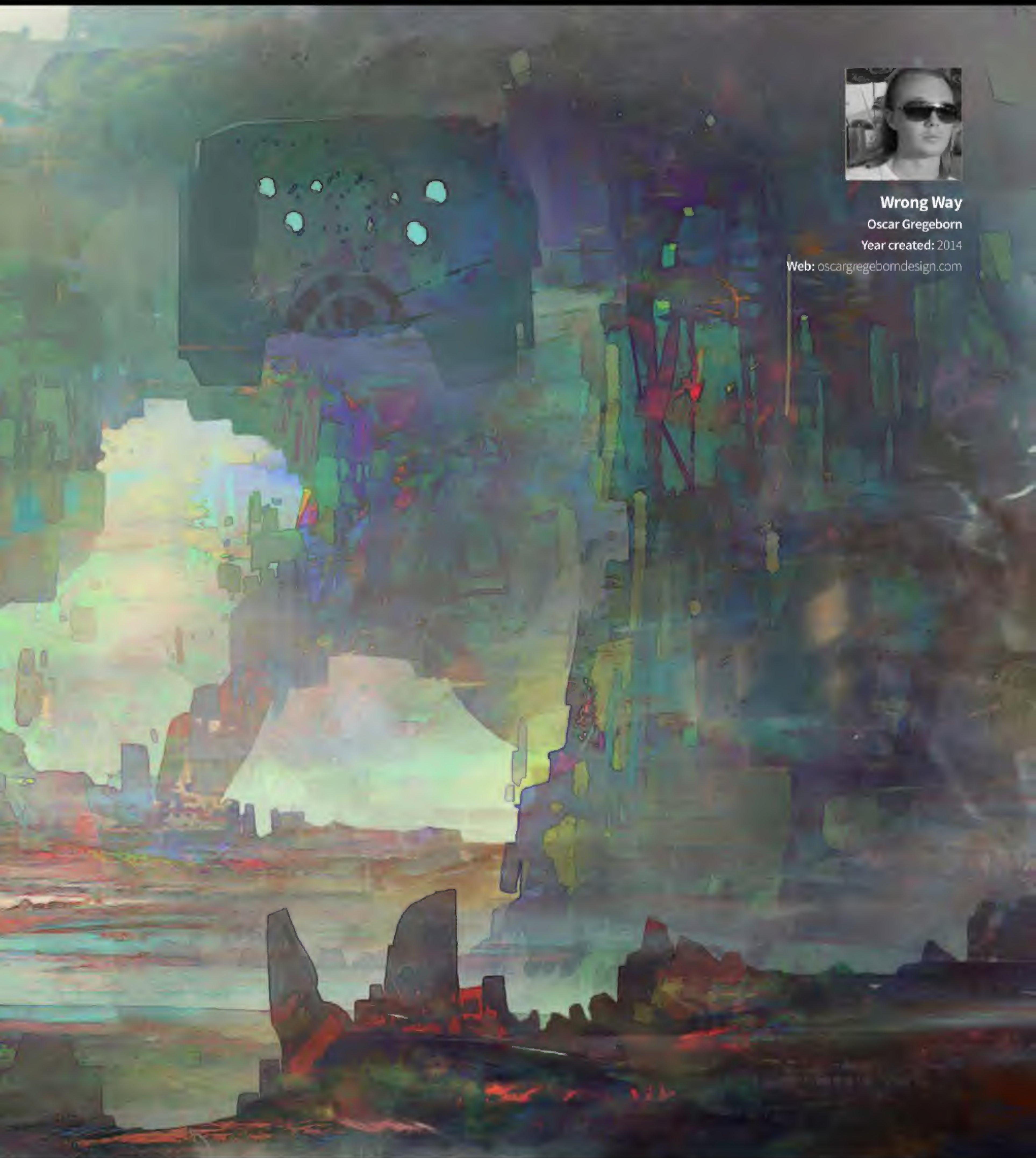


Wrong Way

Oscar Gregeborn

Year created: 2014

Web: oscardgregeborndesign.com





Hide and Seek

Renju Mv

Year created: 2014

Web: renjuart.webs.com







Where the battle began

liangxiang

Year created: 2014

Web: artstation.com/artist/xiangart

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(Left)



Robohead

Jan Urschel

Year created: 2014

Web: hendrix-design.com

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(Above)



Mech Design Defined

Michal Kus

Software used:

Photoshop

Year created: 2014

Web: gumroad.com/michalkus



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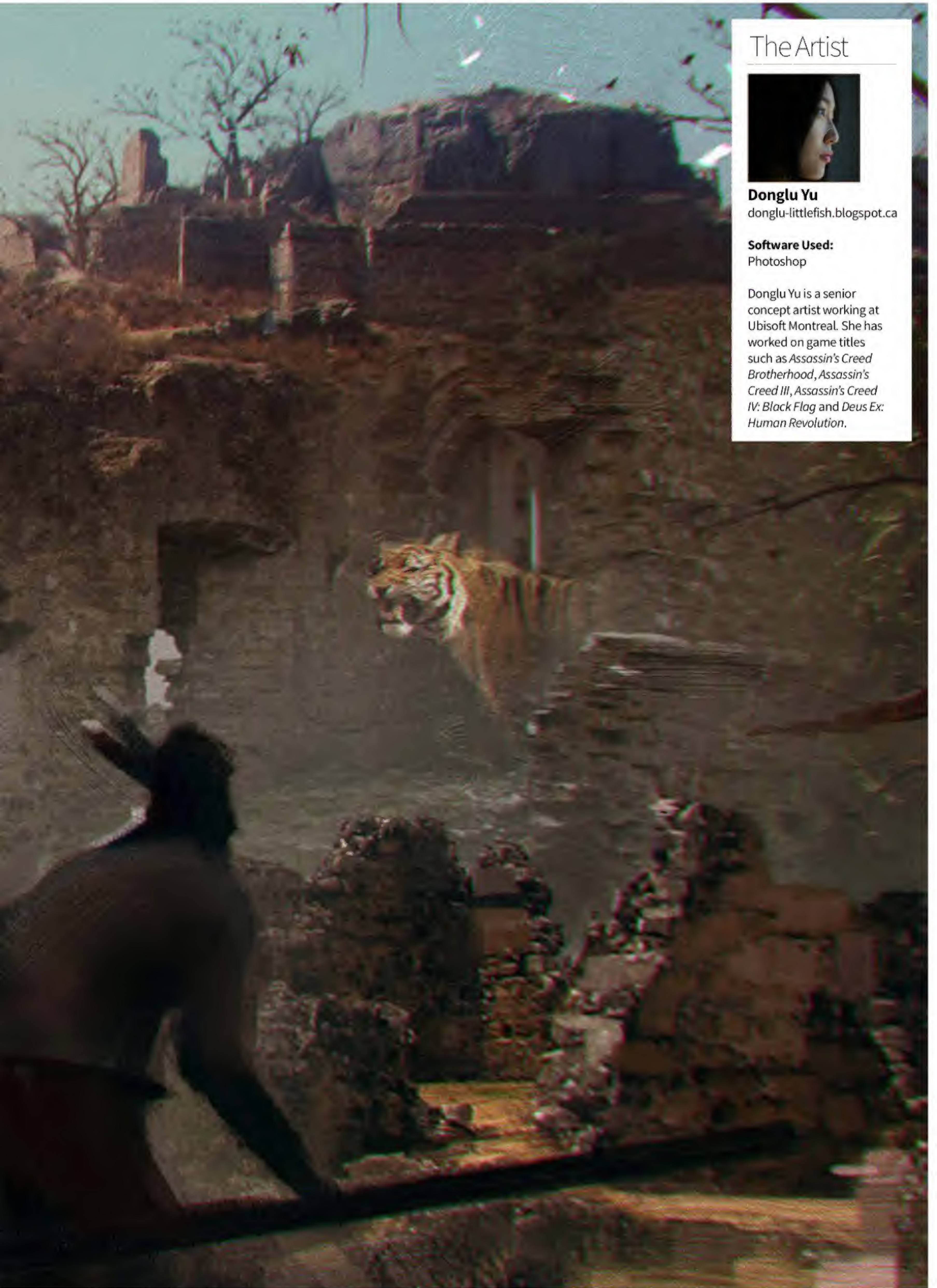
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Explore coloring techniques

As part of a series that takes a look at both the fundamentals of creating visual art and the technical parts of digital painting, Donglu Yu provides detailed, step-by-step tutorials that cover the principal techniques employed in Photoshop to create a complex action scene of your own. In this issue, Donglu demonstrates techniques to add color to your black-and-white paintings [▶](#)



The Artist



Donglu Yu

donglu-littlefish.blogspot.ca

Software Used:
Photoshop

Donglu Yu is a senior concept artist working at Ubisoft Montreal. She has worked on game titles such as *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, *Assassin's Creed III*, *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* and *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*.

Learn how to add color to areas of your image using masks and adjustment layers...

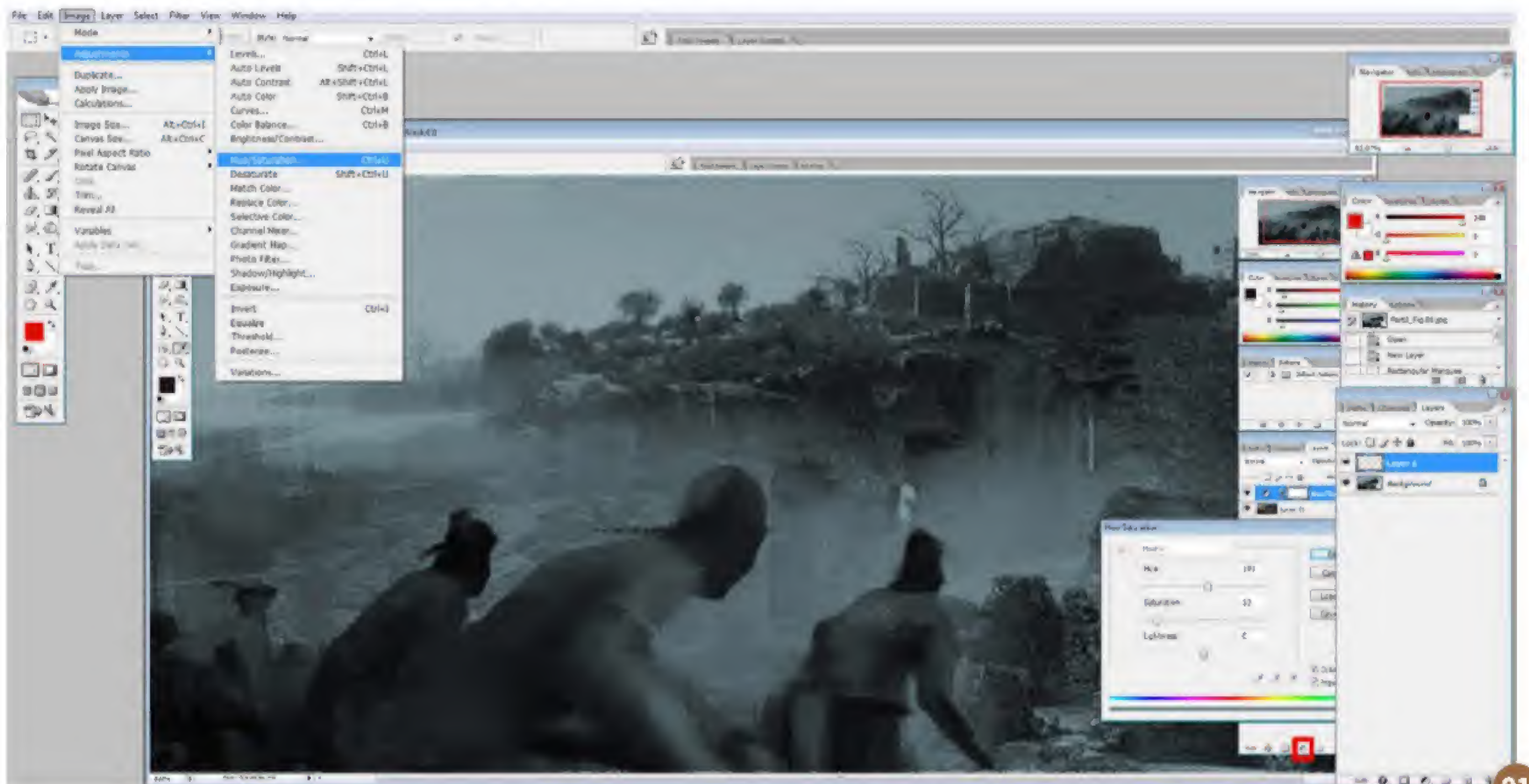
With the final black-and-white base painting completed, we can move forward with the coloring process. It is important to keep the gesture and loose feel of the black-and-white painting throughout the coloring without over-rendering the image with small brushstrokes. Hence, we will focus on the overall feel and color scheme in this part of the tutorial and worry about the finer details later on.

01 The Hue/Saturation window: The adjustment layer Hue/saturation is my dearest friend in the coloring process. There are two ways to access it: From the Image tab, go to Adjustments > Hue/Saturation, or use the little circle symbol at the bottom of your layer window.

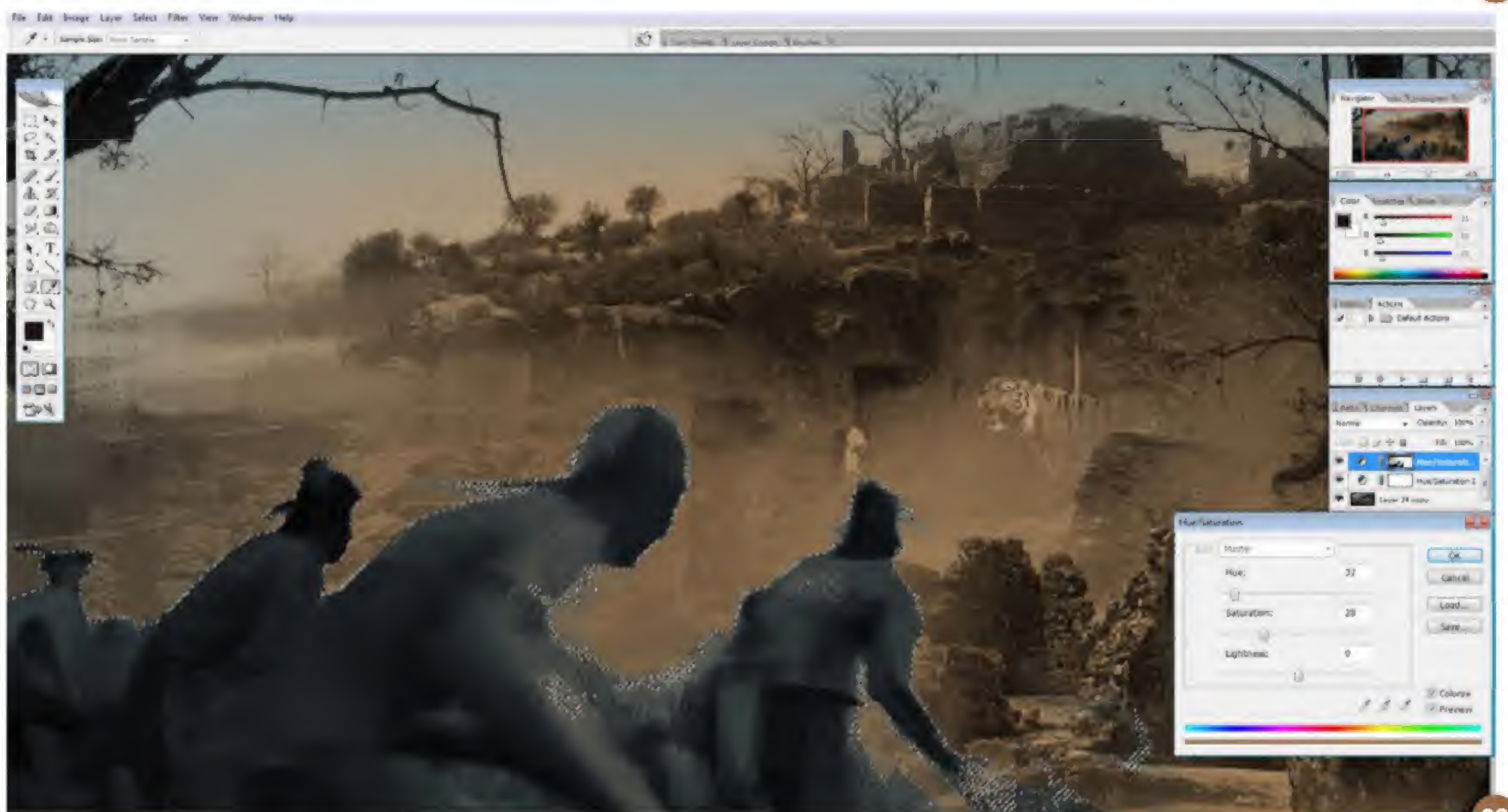
I start to give the overall painting a desaturated blue tone. Don't forget to tick on the Colorize box in the Hue/Saturation dialogue window; it will make the whole painting monochromatic. You can slide freely with the hue sliding bar to achieve a variety of different color variations, and the

saturation sliding bar to desaturate the painting to your preference.

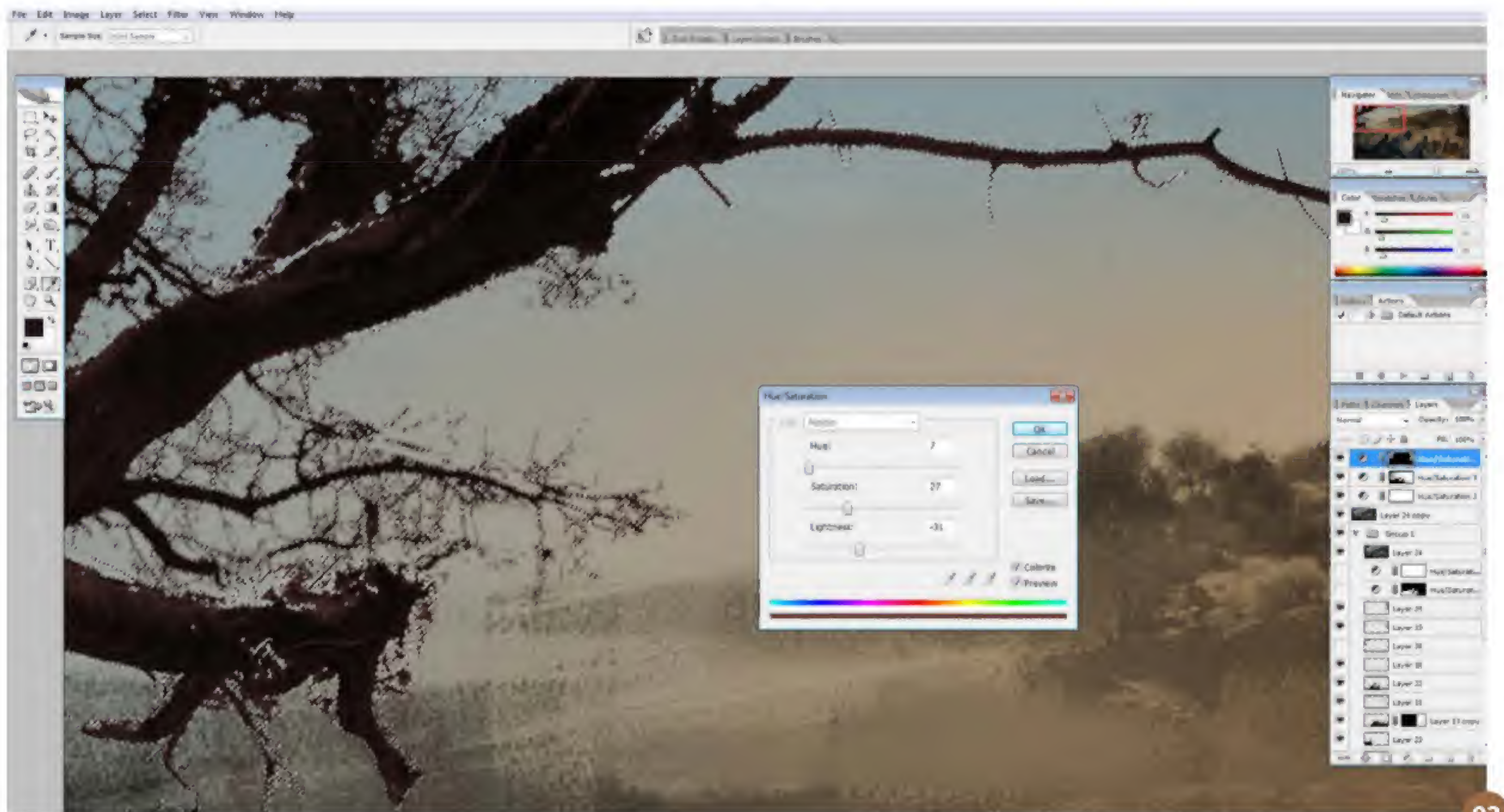
02 Adding a basic brown color: I continue to add more colors to the painting. I use the same technique to get a light-brown color layer. It sets the basic color for the temple ruins. Since I only want this brown color layer to apply to the temple, I use a gradient mask to reveal the first blue layer for the sky and another mask to reveal the characters.



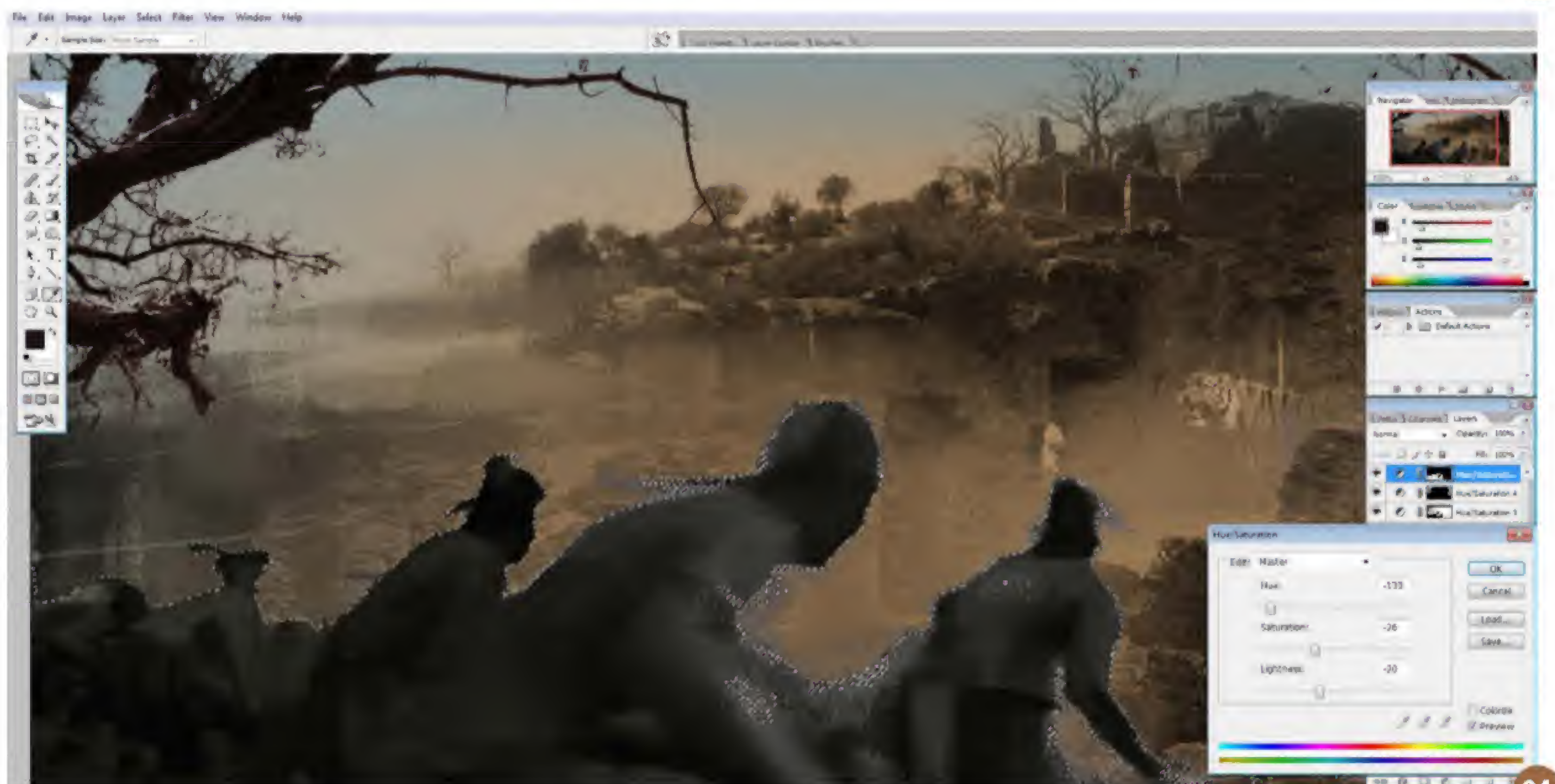
01



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03 Darker colors – trees: I have kept all my masks from my last tutorial, so it is making my job much easier now. If you didn't preserve the masks, it is not too late to make them now. However, don't solely use the Lasso tool to select your elements – using any painting brush to trace the contour so the masks have a loose silhouette of the characters, will give the image a stronger traditional painting feel.

Now let's boost up some dark-brown color for the foreground tree branches using the hue/saturation adjustment layer.

04 Darker colors – hunters: I take a step back and look at the picture and notice the foreground hunters are too light, so I darken them and desaturate them even more since they are in the shadow, ready to jump out to capture the wild beast. Also, they should be one of the darkest elements of the image to further enhance the atmospheric perspective.

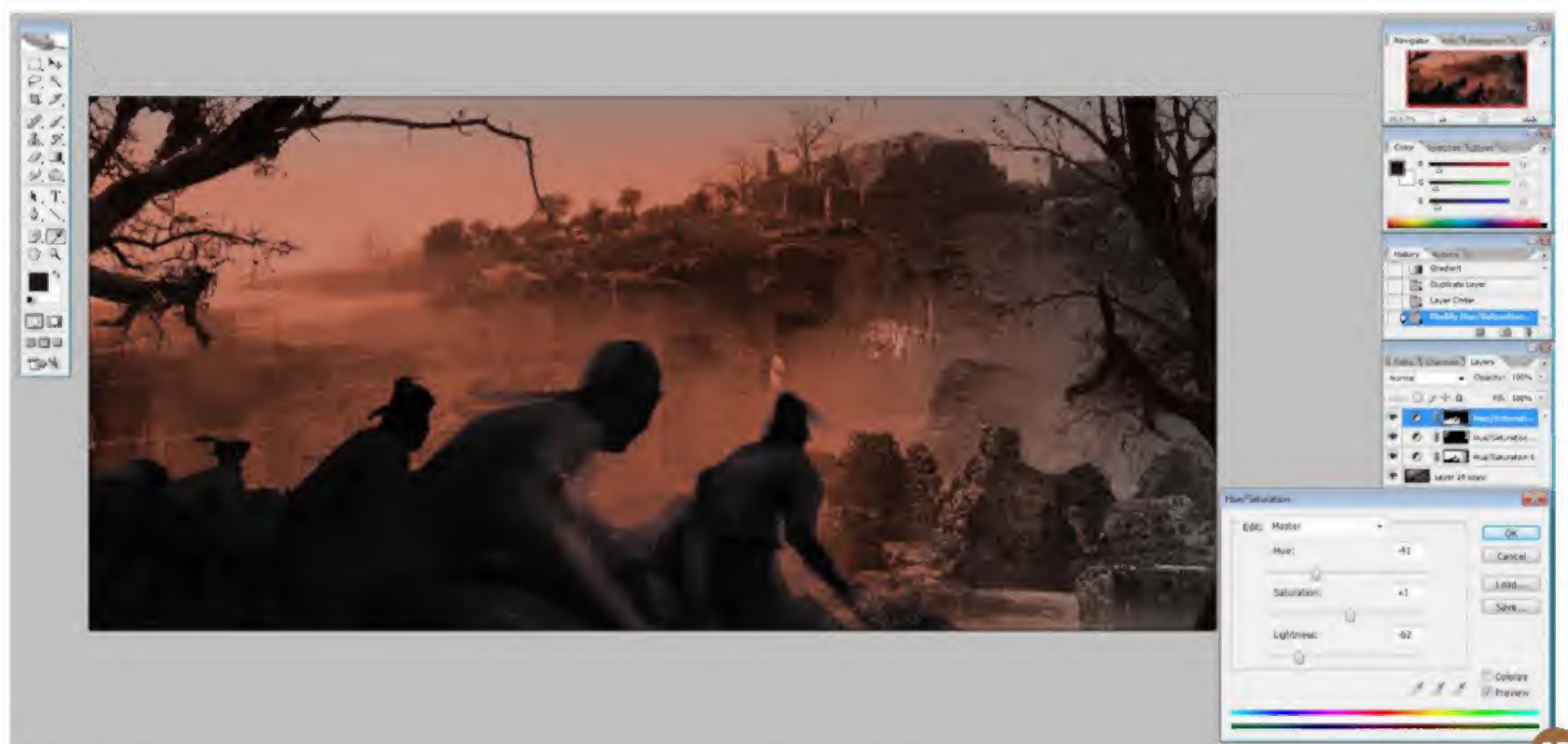
05 Exploring other color schemes: With all the digital tools that Photoshop provides us, we have the convenience to try other color schemes/time of day to make sure that we ▶

01 Locating the Hue/Saturation window and working with the hue sliding bar

02 Using a gradient mask to block out the sky and characters

03 Boosting the brown tones in the foreground trees

04 Deepening the tones on the foreground hunters to create perspective



have made the right color choice. So even though I am pretty happy with the basic color tone, I still want to take a few more minutes to explore other possibilities. Some traditional painters do this step on very small color thumbnails on canvas, watercolor paper and other traditional media – just another way to refresh our minds with different visual inputs.

06 More color schemes: To have more fun, I make another evening color trial with a desaturated dark-blue tone. Now I have three color directions to choose from: a daytime one, a sunset one and an evening one.

Based on my personal preference, I find the daytime one the best. And it should also be the most suitable one serving for a tutorial purpose

since it has the potential to give more color information and nuances. The other two are probably better for speed mood-paintings. If I'm doing this piece as a production art, I will keep the sunset and the evening ones for the Art Director and the Lighter – maybe they will need them just for extra references.

Of course, there are still other possibilities such as dawn, noon, late afternoon, and midnight to explore. If you want to practice even more, it is also enjoyable to try out different weather conditions with the same setting, such as a rainy day, heavy snow, heavy fog, and so on. You need to make a lot of careful observations in your daily life or thorough studies of photo references to make those different visual explorations believable. It might be time consuming, but after

a lot of practice, you'll be able to respond to the Art Director requests or production needs with much more ease.

07 Refining the colors: With the basic color set, I am going to focus on different parts of the image to further push the color nuances. Starting with the temple up on the hill, I enhance all the facets facing the light with a lighter brownish tone. In order to contrast with the light facets, I give all the shadow areas a much darker purple tone. Suddenly, the structure has much more depth and a three-dimensional feel to it.

It also helps to give all the vegetation a very desaturated green as it shows here in this image. For the light stone texture on the temple walls,



07

I paste some rock texture and erase it lightly to make it blend in with the rest of the image.

08 Painting the tiger: It is time to give the tiger yellow fur and a black-and-white stripe motif. It is pretty simple because there are tons of tiger references that you can find out there on the internet.

09 The hunters and ruins: To continue, I add the dark skin tone to the native hunters since they are constantly exposed to the sun and rough weather conditions. Paint in the different skin color nuances to sculpt the muscles. As long as their posing conveys some kind of ready-to-hunt movement, it should be fine. Don't over draw the body anatomy too much, because it makes the characters freeze in the image and you lose the gesture feel of them.

Finally, I repeat the similar process with the ruins in the right-side bottom-corner. Don't hesitate to paste rock textures on the ruins and erase them here and there randomly – it helps the photo integration to fit in better with the painting.

10 The color pass: Our color pass is now complete! As you can see, the color pass preserves the nice painting feel that we had in the black-and-white painting. This is mainly because of the intensive use of the adjustment layers. If we were to paint in the color merely with a brush, the painting would soon become hard to manage with all kinds of smaller strokes and color variations.



08

Even though the creation of the painting relies intensively on the artistic side of the artist, a logical and methodical approach on the technical side can make the whole process much faster and effortless. As you might have noticed in this tutorial, I have three secret weapons to help me achieve this result: the use of masks, adjustment layers and the integration of photo textures. ●

- 05** A sunset color scheme with a red-dominated palette, keeping all the foreground elements in the dark shadow
- 06** Trying out different color schemes
- 07** Refining the color nuances in the scene
- 08** Adding fur and stripes to the tiger
- 09** Adding gestural shapes to the hunters, and texture to the ruins
- 10** The complete color pass



09

The Artist



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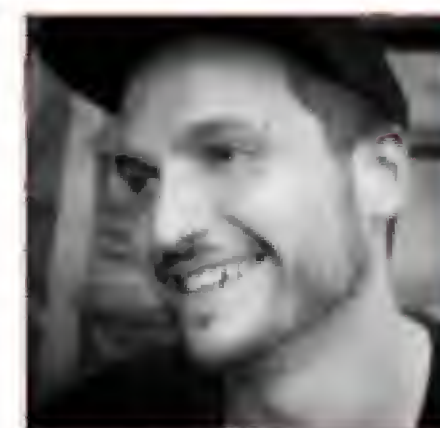
Create an artificial lighting set-up

Working in the entertainment sector of the industry often requires you to work quickly to adjust already established scenes and create variations. In the following tutorial, discover the techniques Nacho Yagüe uses to manipulate an image to reflect the lighting of an artificially lit scene at night time [▶](#)





The Artist



Nacho Yagüe

nachoyague.net

Software Used:

Photoshop

Nacho Yagüe is a concept artist in the videogame industry who has worked on projects such as *Splinter Cell: Blacklist* and the upcoming *Assassin's Creed: Unity*. He currently works at Ubisoft Toronto (Canada).

MASTER LIGHTING SCENARIOS

CHAPTER 03 CAN BE SEEN
IN ISSUE 103
2dartistmag.com

Discover techniques to set up and paint an artificial lighting scenario in Photoshop...

In this tutorial I am going to demonstrate how to light a night scene with artificial lighting. I previously saved a file with a basic night scene without lights; I will start this new mood from that image, and share some useful tips throughout this process.

Once again I emphasize the importance of separating all the elements of the scene into different layers, so when you need to make changes it will take less time and effort.

01 Setting where the light comes from: Before starting I make a fast diagram of where the sun/moon should be in each piece. In this scene I situate the moon far away from the window, so this time I can use artificial light to illuminate it.

I want to paint another mood where blue is not the main color, as in our previous scene. The light coming from the lamps will be strong enough to create a nice atmosphere, without using any light coming from the outside.

02 Adding the base tone: Following the same process I did in the previous chapter, I change the tone of the picture. As I'm reusing the previous image, all the areas are already separated into different layers, so I save a lot of time. I just tone down the blue color a little bit, paint the background, and darken the sky. I also add a layer defining the light from the right side of the scene.

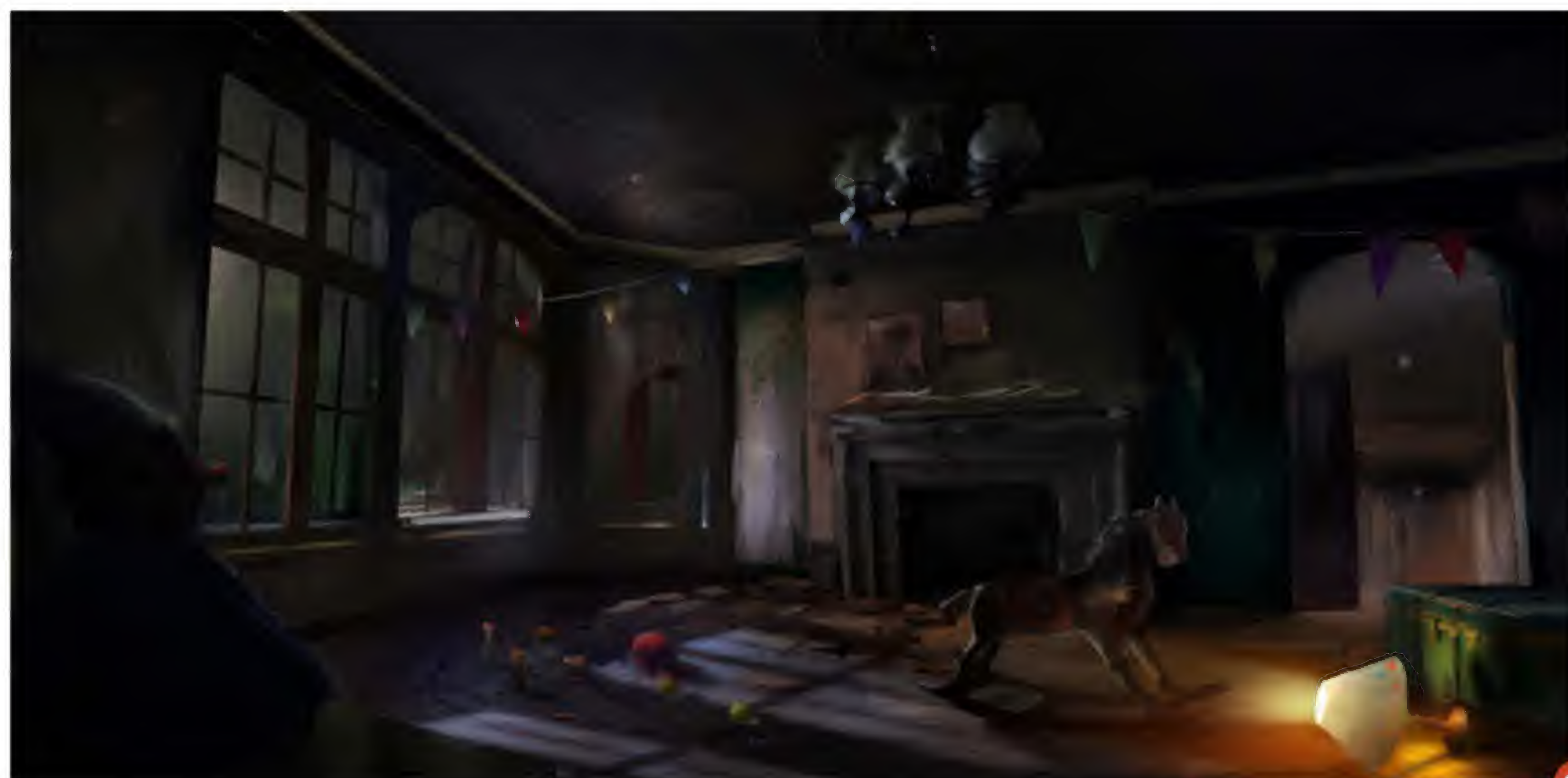


As the purpose of this tutorial is about showing the changes in light and atmosphere, I focus on that and keep my rough brushstrokes big and powerful so I don't get caught up in the detail.

03 The initial light source: First I thought about adding some light coming from the ceiling lamp, but I want to keep away from

common illumination and I'm looking for a spookier, creepy feeling. That's why I decide to add all the main lights from beneath.

This time my objective is to focus the attention on the horse by lighting its face. Having an intense light coming from the bottom and lighting up half of the horse unveils a strong focal point.





04



05

I add a couple of layers of light with Color Dodge and Overlay layers. As you can see, I saturate the areas of the chest and floor – light always makes the colors pop out!

04 Defining the light: I paint some spotlights on the ceiling lampshades and increase the brightness on the upper surface with a couple of layers set to Overlay and Lighten mode. The upper part was too flat and the lights from the bottom are strong enough to project some dull luminosity.

The luminescence from the lamp on the floor is white/yellow and when it hits the chest, its colors pop out in an intense warm green. This is another

concept to have in mind; colors in darkness tend to be more desaturated than the ones directly in the light.

I add the first layer of light to the horse generating a very interesting volume. I trick the light intensity a little bit because I want some bright areas on the right side as well, though I still have to add the light from the ghost lamp.

05 Adding the second light: Once I'm happy with the light from the right, I add the second source to balance the composition. You can check if your composition works by flipping your canvas horizontally several times throughout your process. ►

01 The sketch showing where the light will come from

02 Changing the tones and brightness for each area separately

03 Adding the first source of light coming from the right side

04 A diagram of the light direction

05 Adding light to the lamp on the left to balance the composition



06

The light coming from the ghost lamp reinforces the silhouette of the clown in the foreground, which adds more depth to the scene. I light up the candles and give more light intensity by adding more saturation to the red ball.

06 Light corrections: I keep adding some dull light to the ceiling. The lampshade material is highly reflective, so I paint some spots of bright light coming from the two directions.

I work on the light hitting the wooden horse and brighten up the area on the left side to compensate the visual composition. Again, don't forget to flip your canvas horizontally (Image > Rotate Canvas > Flip Canvas Horizontal) to detect any possible composition mistakes!

I paint some reflections on the glass and some rim light in the frame to give some volume and make the light more believable. Before I continue to polish the image, I add a soft yellow tone to the image using a photo filter (Image > Adjustments > Photo Filter).

07 Adding the character: Here he is again! I had the initial idea of moving the character closer and closer to the camera in every scene, but as the main idea of this tutorial was to show light changes in the same scene, I thought I was making the character too prominent. Also, when I tried the character in the foreground, the silhouette was taking up a big portion of the image and fading some important lights.

That said, I decide to go for something more moderate and place him behind the chest, so he is almost hidden.



07

There's no direct light affecting his shape, but the one coming from the lamp is strong enough to light his face a little bit from the bottom and make him look more mysterious. As always, I slightly change his expression.

08 Color splashes: Here I'm going to explain a trick I use when I want to add some extra color to the image. I'm getting very monochromatic tones, so I want to add some color noise in some areas.

Usually I get a photo or a painting with a large variety of colors and put it on the top in a new layer and set it to Hue or Saturation mode (just try both modes and see which colors you like the most). Then I apply a mask to that layer, and paint and erase here and there, with fast brushstrokes. As always, when using a mask, you will reveal the masked image when you add white to the masked layer. The whiter it is, the more you show.

As you can see in the image, with this technique I add some interesting orange, red and pink tones to the image that contrast with the pale greens of the main palette.

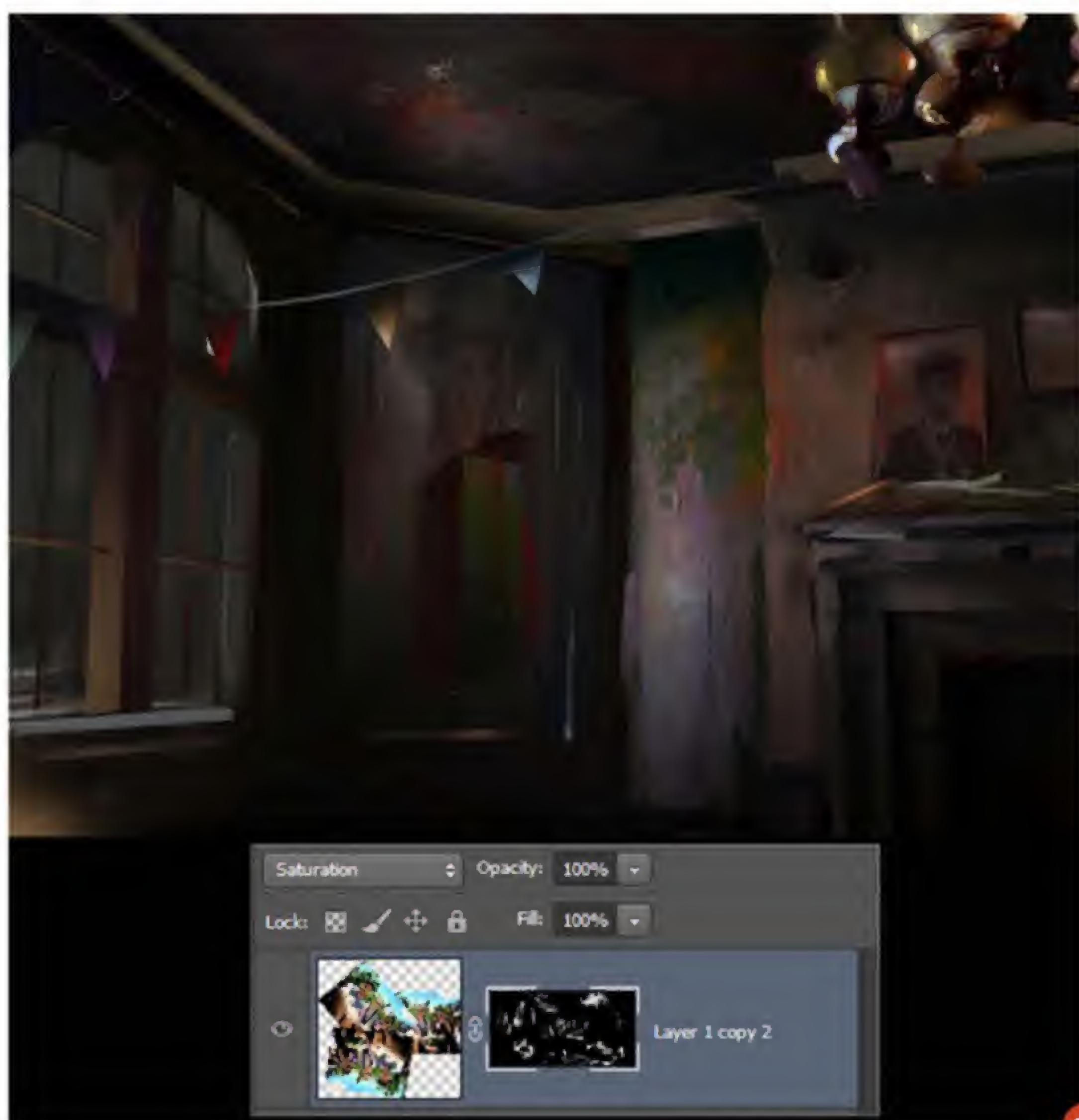
09 Value correction: I will never get tired of reminding you how important the values are in your composition and how they can make your image work better. I always turn the image to black-and-white every few steps to check if the proportions are balanced.

In the last stages I make some corrections to the values. I adjust the Curves, add a new layer in Overlay mode and paint slightly with a Round Soft brush in grayscale and/or add another extra layer in Screen mode (65% opacity) to create some atmosphere, add depth and blend some tones.

10 Final retouch: In this last step I just apply the final retouches to enhance the image. I make one last color pass, this time using a photo filter (Image > Adjustments > Photo Filter) to slightly change the overall tone.

With the Mixer Brush tool (click and hold on the brush icon on the toolbar, and select the last option) I paint some random and fast strokes to break some straight edges. The Mixer Brush tool is a hybrid between a brush and the Smudge tool. I don't use it too much, just a little bit to reinforce the painterly and "dirty" aspects of the image.

When I'm happy with the overall image I just sharpen the edges using Filter > Sharpen > Unsharp mask. ●



⚡ PRO TIP

Organize your layers and files

When you have to do some mood variations, it's better to keep all the changes in different layers so you can come back to the original one whenever you want. Try to be very organized, it will help you when you have a file with 50 or 60 layers. Rename the layers and group them into categories. Saving different versions of the image is also very useful if you want to go to previous versions and compare these changes.

06 Adding some light corrections to balance the composition

07 Adding the character to the scene

08 Adding some color tones using a masked layer in Saturation mode

09 Checking and adjusting the values

The Artist



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adtotal.com

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Create water brushes

Generate and use custom brushes to paint an underwater scene—
Laura Sava shows you how

Explore coloring techniques

Donglu Yu demonstrates a professional approach to coloring a rendered black and white image

BUILD A CITY WITH TEXTURES

Tomas Honz reveals techniques to quickly construct a painterly primal city in Photoshop

+plus

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Mastering character art

Will Murai talks about creating characters and shares the secrets of his coloring process

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The Artist



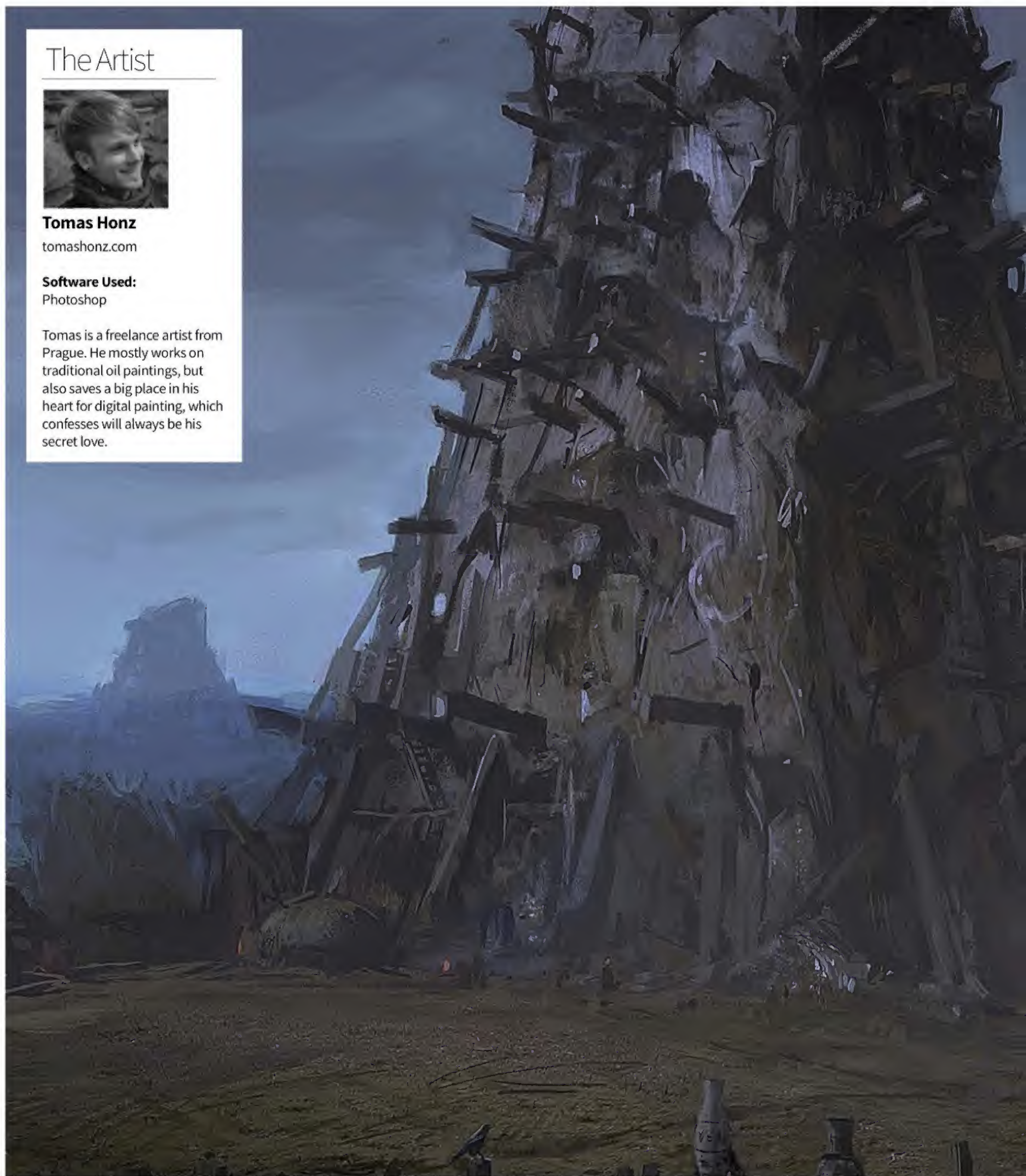
Tomas Honz

tomashonz.com

Software Used:

Photoshop

Tomas is a freelance artist from Prague. He mostly works on traditional oil paintings, but also saves a big place in his heart for digital painting, which confesses will always be his secret love.



Build a city with textures

Tomas Honz draws on his experience with traditional mediums to quickly construct a painterly primal city in Photoshop, sharing top tips for adding texture along the way ▶





Tomas Honz shows you how to create quick concepts for a primal city in Photoshop...

For this image I decided to go with a painterly style, which is closest to my heart. However, I believe that it's the result that counts in art, so by all means use anything you want to make that great painting.

I wanted mine to be cold, set up in a wet, dark, cloudy landscape. I wanted to depict the struggle of people and most importantly, I wanted the viewer to feel it. All my decisions during the process were made to support that original idea.

This tutorial will be aimed at conveying principles, not techniques. I want to give you some tips and tools that you can bear in mind all the time, not just a list of techniques on how to do this and that.

01 Getting started: Start with a little bit of brainstorming. Think about what you want to paint and try to imagine what it would be like to stand there. Ask yourself these questions: Why? How? Where? Give your environment a reason to exist.

“Most of the time use a bigger brush than you think is necessary – this will force you to learn to simplify”



At the same time, do a series of thumbnails. Spend only a few minutes on each and focus on values and big shapes. Choose the thumbnail that fits your topic the best.

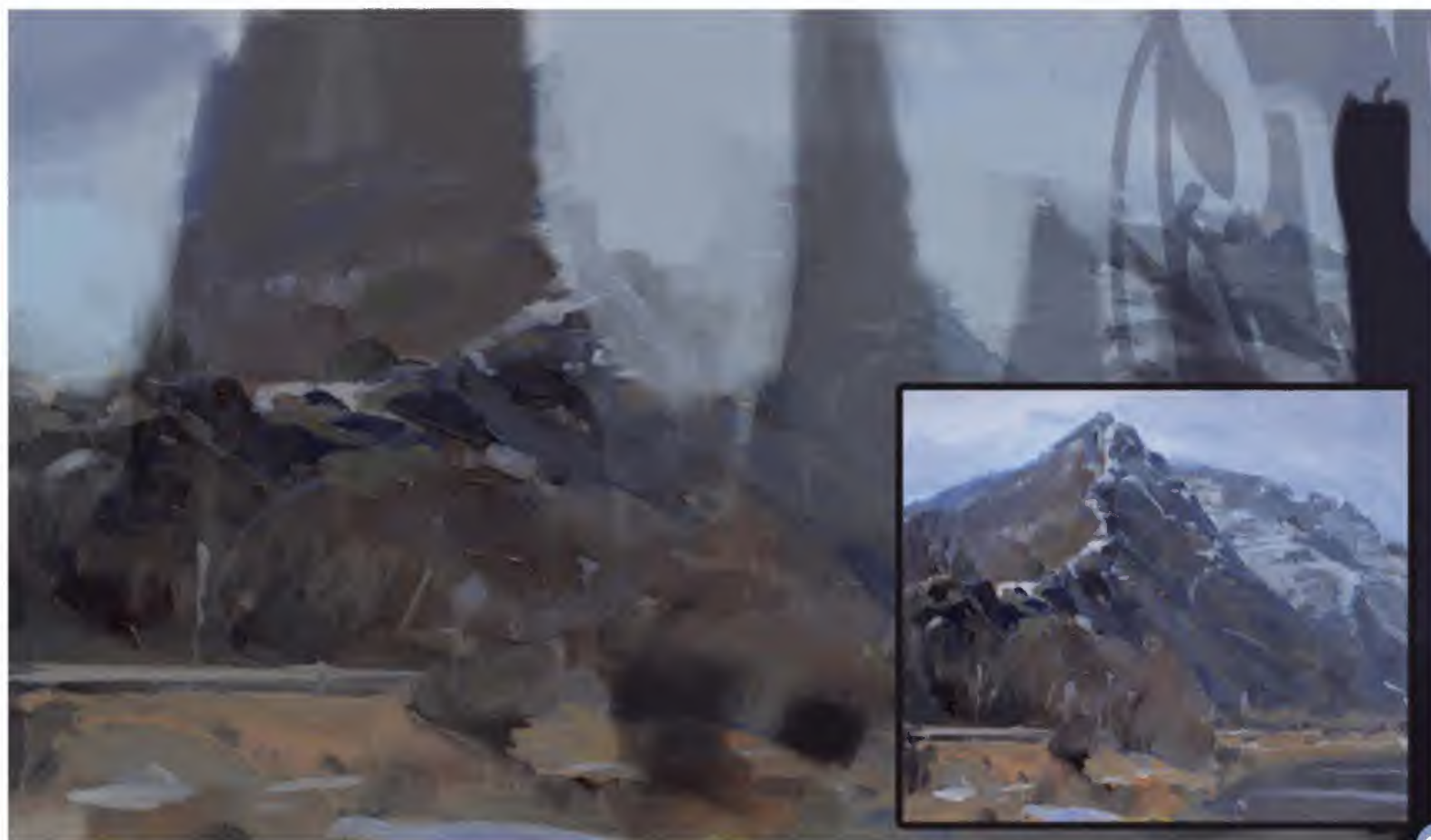
When you know what you want to do, collect references you think you will need and save them in the same folder as your painting – this way you will not have to break the flow every time you need some texture. Try to also find artworks of other artists. Don't limit yourself to digital artists, check old masters too. You will be surprised by how many of them already solved similar problems that you will be facing while painting. Use their knowledge to your advantage! And last but not least, don't be afraid to go out with a sketchbook. All the answers lie out there.



01

02 Establishing color harmony: Start working in color right away. Pick your color scheme from your photos or preferably, though this might not be possible for all of you, from your real life studies. I took one of my older paintings, set it at 70% transparency and basically painted over it until I got what I had on the thumbnail again. You can leave parts of the photography or painting visible to add some nice variety to the image.

03 Explode with brushstrokes: Now you can really start painting. Always keep in mind the big picture, as details, highlights and the darkest shadows may come later. Most of the time use a bigger brush than you think is necessary – this will force you to learn to simplify.



02

You want to be able to paint stuff with just a few brushstrokes, right?

I tend to use classic painterly brushes pretty much randomly at this stage. Again, you do not want details; you want big, clearly designed shapes and lots of variety all over the image. Use many brushes at random now.

04 Examination: Work all over the image at the same time. Step away (zoom out) regularly and mirror the painting to see it with fresh eyes. Use a simple perspective grid like I

did to make sure everything is correct (I will have some tweaking to do here).

Also turn your painting to black-and-white to see if your values are balanced. Repeat these check-ups regularly along the way. If you feel you have difficulties with making good decisions, take a break. The painting will tell you itself what to do next, so listen to it! At this stage, I decided to expand the canvas horizontally a bit.

05 More rendering and design revision: I usually paint without using photos and ▶

01 Put your thumbnails next to each other and decide which one suits you best. You can use the others later too!

02 Don't do this as a practice. Instead try to establish color harmony by yourself if you feel you are lacking in color

03 You will be proceeding with this stage very quickly – it should be fun!

04 Assessing your own work is a very important skill to learn



03



04

textures for as long as I can. If you learn not to rely on them too much, you will have much more freedom when painting.

At this stage, I decide to revise the design of the buildings. I look up some mud structures on the internet and after some consideration, I decide to go with this design. From the very beginning, I also wanted to depict how the skyscrapers were built, so I paint people and ox carts carrying mud to the tower that is under construction.

06 Textures and photos: Now is the time to use your secret weapons. Use as many textures and references as you like but be careful not to destroy what you already have.

The way I usually blend the photos is to set them to some reasonable transparency and play with blending options (Layer > Layer style > Blending options) which is a really useful tool for me. You can also play with different blending modes or try to apply the Match color function to your photo (Image > Adjustments > Match color).

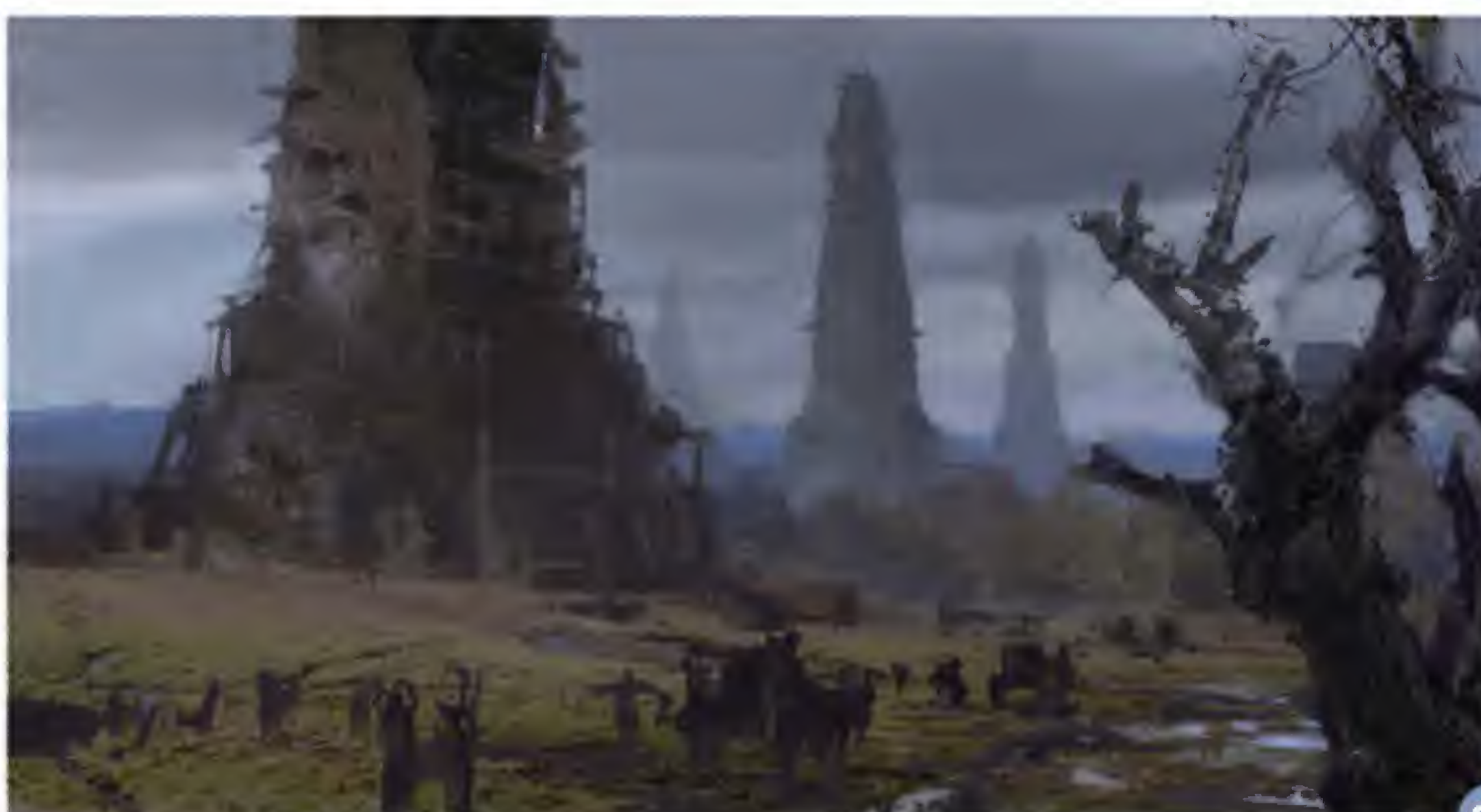
07 Adding detail: Now you can zoom in. Add details; work all over the image at the same time. Don't forget to mirror the image every now and then to see if everything's correct!

I didn't have a good reference for the construction site so I decided to paint the building myself. Sometimes you will not be able to find the perfect photography and at that time, painting skill becomes useful.

08 Brushstrokes and second design revision: Don't just scatter your strokes randomly, do them with purpose. You can use them, for instance, to help lead the eye, like I did subtly all over the image. Check Joaquim Sorolla or Anders Zorn, they do this pretty well.



05



06

Also again, I decide to revisit the design of the buildings. Don't be afraid to make big changes at any time! No part of a painting should be too precious to you. Be willing to scrape it off without having regret.

09 Composition: I highlighted the eye-flow here. Most of the time, you want the viewer to spend some time looking at your painting and that's what's happening here too. I

put the tree to the right to block the way so the eye is forced to stay on the picture longer. You can use lines, shapes, color or brushstrokes to do this. Also notice how I'm mimicking shapes and strokes all over the image. The tree has a similar structure to the building. Composition is about the relationships between assets – everything relates to everything else.

⚡ PRO TIP

Control your sharpness

I made the final image very sharp to highlight the rough texture of the painting, which supports my original idea of a rough, cold, primitive picture. Be careful with this though, not every painting needs to be super sharp. Assess your original idea and then decide. Also notice the direction of the brushstrokes.



10 **Final touches:** Be careful with highlights, it's very easy to overdo them. Also don't add things just for effect. All that you do should be aimed to support your original idea. Way too often I see these super-crazy, colorful paintings full of flashes and highlights. You will have to do these things for clients, so don't do them in your personal pieces. Not every painting must be super-dramatic.

Before you call your piece finished, put it aside for a day or two and return to it then. You will be surprised by how differently you will see it and you will likely want to make some changes. ●

05 You have the absolute right to change anything on the painting at any time. You are God here

06 You can also distort your photos in many ways. You will be surprised how many ways you can use a single picture. Use Warp. (Edit > Transform > Warp)

07 You can also go out with a camera and a sketchbook and try to find the reference yourself

08 Learning how to use your brush takes time. It will certainly help if you also do some traditional painting

09 In order to master the art of making balanced yet interesting compositions, you have to practice. Study artworks of old masters and other accomplished artists too



07



08



09

⚡ PRO TIP

Choosing brushes

I don't use any specific brushes. Different paintings ask for different brushes. If you don't want to end up being a factory that still follows the same procedure, you'll want to approach every artwork in a different way, which includes choosing different tools. Be an artist!

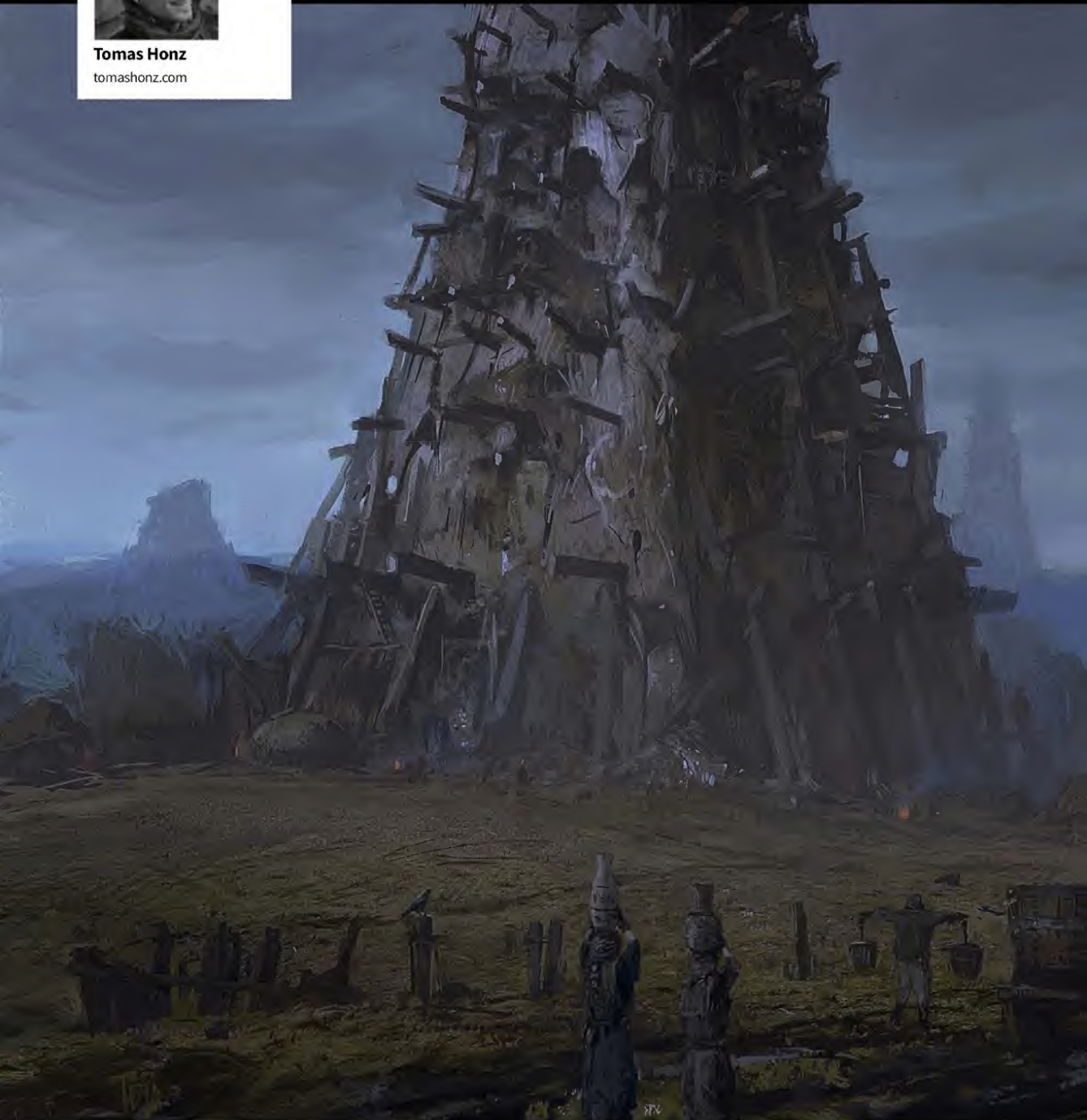


The Artist



Tomas Honz

tomashonz.com







FREE RESOURCES

Brushes



Create cool water brushes

Laura Sava provides an easy to follow step-by-step tutorial showing how to make a set of custom brushes in Photoshop, and how to use them to paint an underwater scene. The techniques demonstrated will help speed up your digital painting process, proving quick methods to add shapes, textures and effects to your images [▶](#)



The Artist



Laura Sava

anotherwanderer.
deviantart.com

Software Used: Photoshop

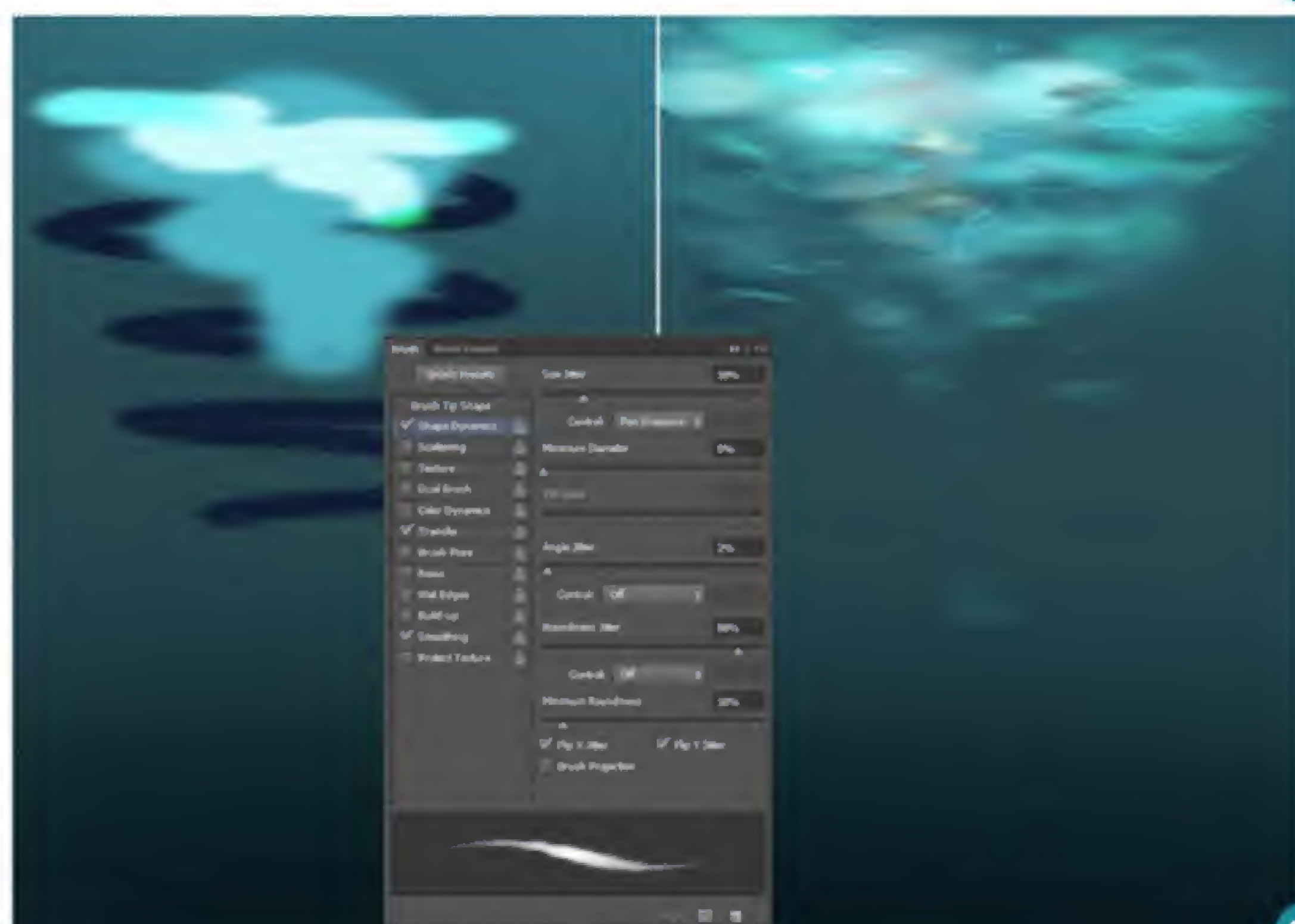
Laura Sava is a freelance illustrator from Romania, whose work up until now includes book covers and illustrations for games. Laura is currently illustrating game cards for Applibot's *Legend of the Cryptids*.

Discover useful techniques to create and use custom brushes to paint an underwater scene...

While Photoshop's default brushes are enough to get you started, creating your own is the next step in experimenting with digital painting. Custom brushes can speed up your work process (especially during the conceptual phase of a project), by providing a quick way to add textures, shapes and effects, allowing you to focus on the big picture instead. Once created, they can be easily modified by adjusting the various parameters available in the Brush menu. Painting textures with custom brushes usually results in a more natural and unitary look than in the case of using plain photo textures.

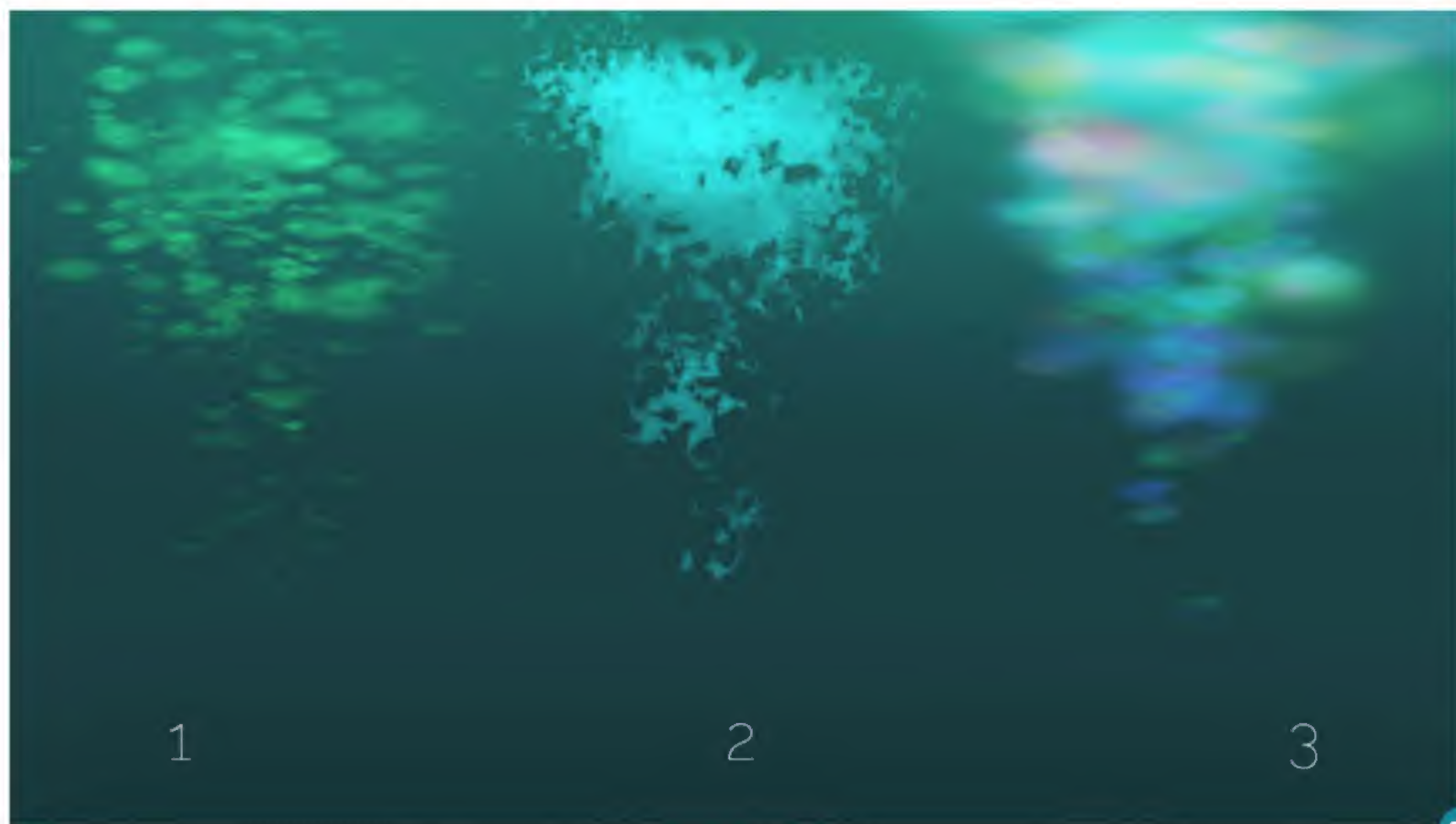
In the following tutorial I'm going to show you how to make a set of Photoshop custom brushes, and how to use them to paint an underwater scene.

There are basically two kinds of brushes: for lack of better terms, I'll call them 'technical' and 'decorative'. The first category refers to brushes which are used for the actual painting process; the second are those that are stamped on, as an accent or to create patterns, often obtained from a photographic source image. The latter ones need to be used sparingly, or they can end up looking artificial, especially in a painterly composition; but they are great for tasks such as matte painting or



01

02



03

realistic concepts. I am going to use both types of brushes here to demonstrate how they can be used together and be made to complement each other in order to create both depth and atmosphere in the image.

01 Brush image source: Open a new file and, on a new layer, paint a circle using a default Soft brush. It's important to use black, because the brush's opacity will be defined by the amount of contrast in the source image, where the darkest color represents maximum opacity and white represents transparency.

Photoshop also has a brush size limit (5,000 pixels in CS6), so make sure the circle is no bigger than that. Select the Lasso tool, right-click on the image, choose Free Transform from the menu, and drag the corners until you get an oval shape. With a soft Eraser set on low opacity, erase a bit of the middle. This will be the source image for the first brush.

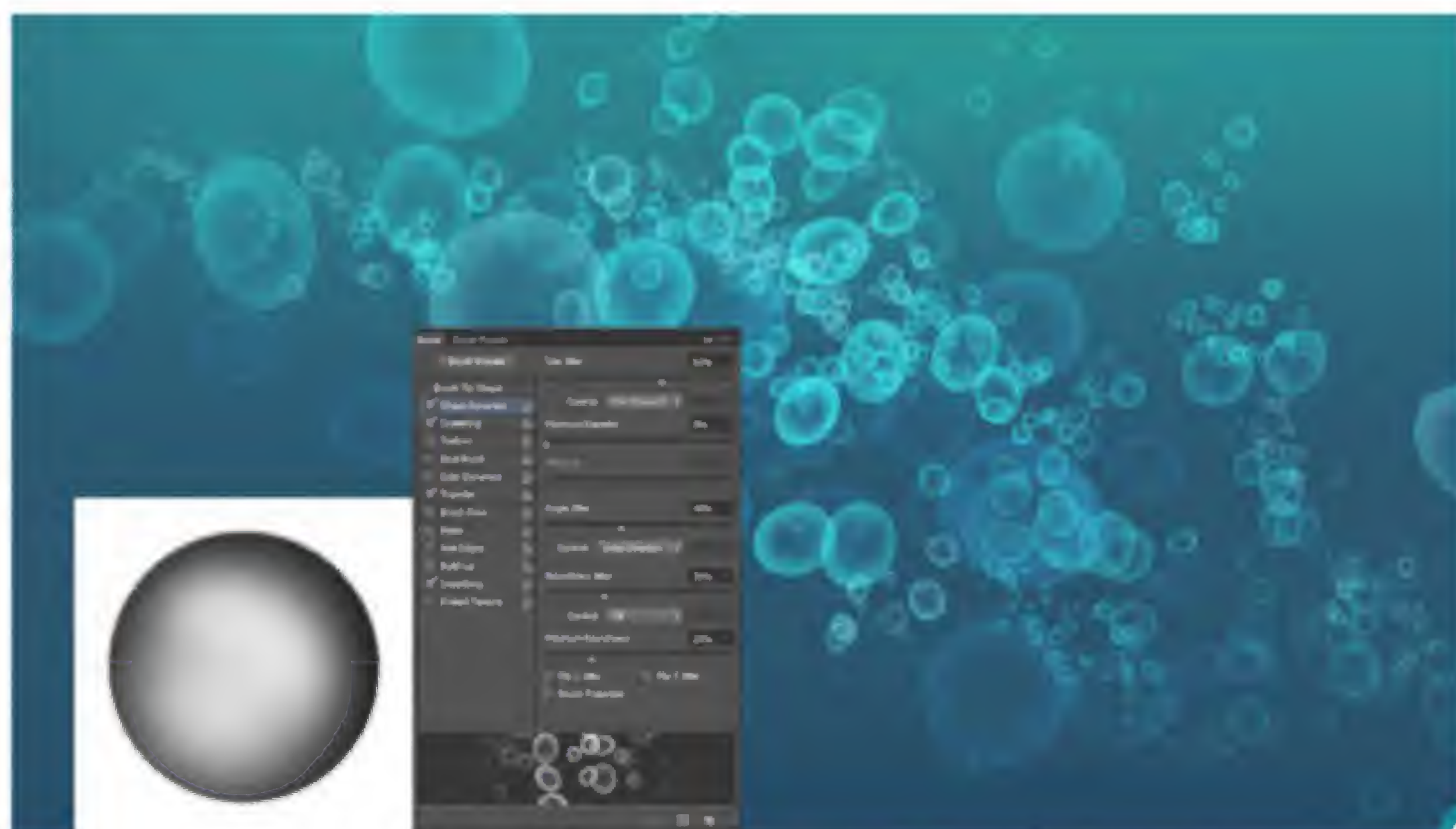
02 Defining and editing the brush: Using the Rectangular Marquee tool (M), select the area around the shape, go to the Edit section of the menu, and choose Define Brush Preset. Now go to your brush list and the newly defined brush should be the last one on the list.

For now it's not much more than a regular soft-edged brush; the difference will be made by the settings. Go to the Brush menu (Window > Brush or F5), check Shape Dynamics and Transfer (or Other Dynamics in older versions), and set the brush spacing to around 25%. Save these settings as a new brush using the small, post-it shaped button in the lower side of the Brush menu (Create new brush).

03 More settings: What we have now is a basic water brush that can be used for painting ripples or waves, but it can be adapted for many other purposes. There are almost endless possibilities for what can be achieved with various combinations of settings.

For the first brush, I also checked the Scatter option, which does exactly what its name suggests and is useful for painting all sorts of particles. For the second brush, check the Dual Brush option, which mixes another brush of your choice with the currently selected one. For the last selection, check the Color Dynamics option, which varies the brush color to different degrees. All these settings have further options for fine-tuning.

04 Bubble brush: Using the same method as for the previous brush, I paint a



04



05

generic bubble shape and define it as a Brush Preset. To achieve the final effect, I check the Transfer and Scattering options, along with Shape dynamics, with Size Jitter set to around 60%, Angle Jitter 40%, and Roundness Jitter set to around 30%.

Unless the brushes are going to be used for high-resolution prints, the source image doesn't need to be extremely detailed. I make most of my custom brushes on the go, while painting, so I'm usually in a hurry to continue work and I don't spend too much time polishing them d.

05 Photo-based brush: Brushes aren't always hand-painted, especially when it comes to intricate textures that would be too time-consuming to recreate manually. A quick solution is to use a photo as the base for the

brush. In this case I'm going to use a photo of sea foam, but textures don't need to be those of the actual objects you want to depict – they just need to resemble them. ►

01 Creating a brush source image

02 Before and after changing settings

03 Playing with different combination settings

04 Creating a bubble brush

05 Creating a brush from a photo. Stock photo credit: <http://senshistock.deviantart.com>

Since, as I mentioned earlier, white areas of an image get converted to transparency for brushes, it is usually a good idea to desaturate and invert the photo. Additionally, the contrast and brightness should be adjusted (Image > Adjustments > Brightness/Contrast). No special settings are applied to this type of brush, which will only be used as a stamp (though that's not a rule, of course).

06 Sketching: Now it's time to put everything together and paint something that makes use of all three brushes. First of all, I want to establish the overall mood of the image, so, with a Soft brush, I paint large areas of light and shadow.

Using the first brush I created earlier, I paint the rippled water surface as seen from below, on the upper side of the image. For more visual interest, I decide to place a character in the picture, so I also sketched a mermaid. On a side note, I got the following tip from photography tutorials: a landscape is usually more appealing when there's a person/character in it, even if only as a small silhouette in the background.

07 Motion: Since the mermaid should appear to be moving forward, the bubble brush is perfect to suggest motion. Besides adding dynamics to an image, particles or swarm-like elements of any kind are also useful as a method of binding together all the elements of a composition. I therefore use this trick pretty often, trying to find a place for some dust specks, falling leaves, shards of glass, or whatever fits the painting's theme best. The effect can be almost imperceptible, as in the case of dust specks, but it will still work in a subtle way.

On this step I also continue to paint the background and add some basic light and shadow to the character.

08 Depth: To create more depth, I add a sunken ship in the background and a few fish, which also help define the sense of movement from left to right. The fact that the mermaid's tail overlaps with the ship makes it easier to perceive the objects as belonging to separate planes and creates the feeling of a three-dimensional space.

The rocks in the foreground add another layer of depth and frame the image, drawing attention to the subject. They are darker than the rest of the elements in order to make them appear closer to the viewer. Meanwhile, the background is partially covered by a blue haze, which gives the illusion of distance.



06



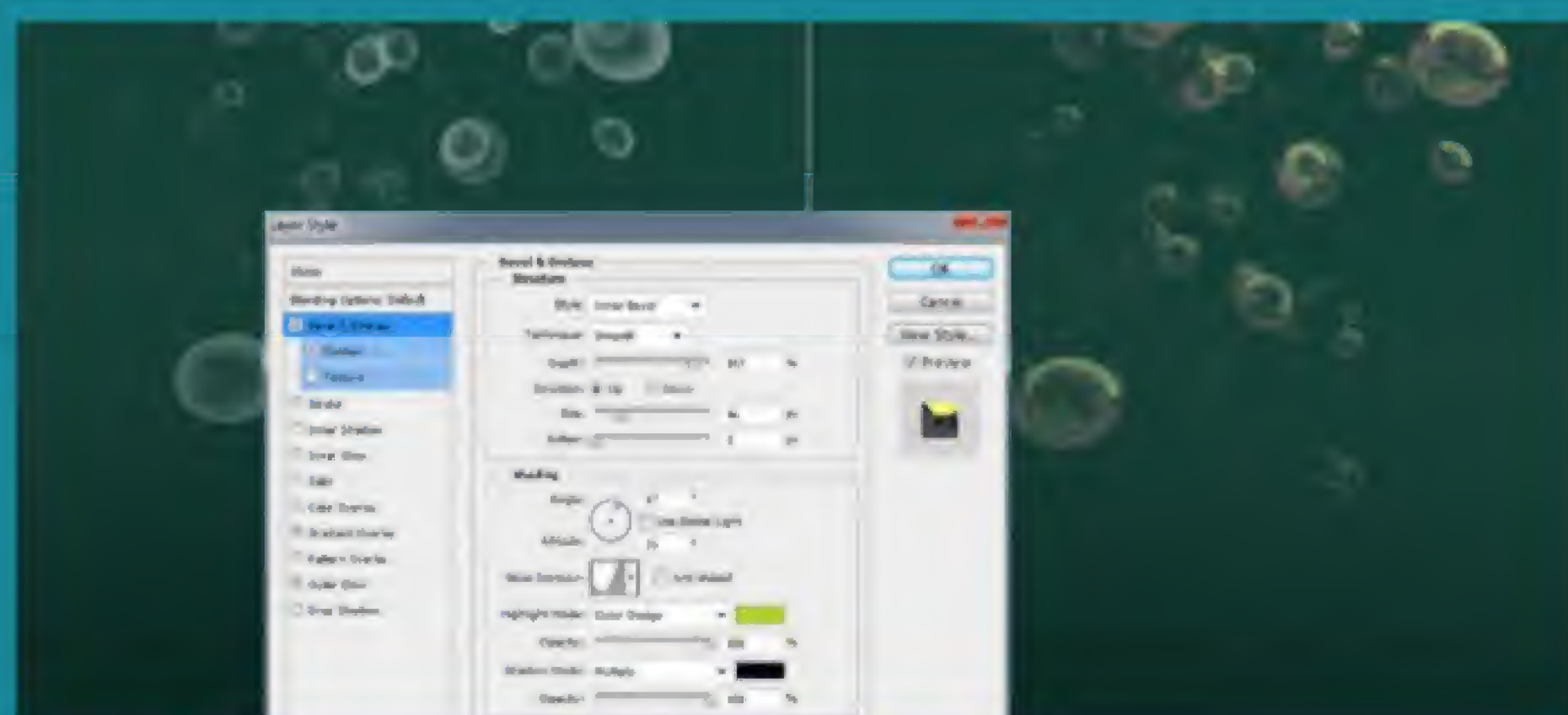
07

PRO TIP

Layer styles

Sometimes custom brushes are not enough for achieving the desired effect, in particular when it comes to detailed foreground objects, but they can be enhanced with the help of layer styles (Layer > Layer Style). For this purpose, the brush needs to be used on a layer separate from the background. Here's a comparison of the same layer: the one on the left is the plain original and the one on the right has several styles applied.

The Bevel and Emboss, Outer Glow and Gradient Overlay options add an instant 3D look to the bubbles. Some newer versions of Photoshop even come with built-in 3D tools, which can be used for further experimenting. But, as with any filters and plug-ins, misusing it can result in an artificial look, so it's best to use this trick only as a base and continue painting over to refine it.





08

This method applies to terrestrial environments as well: close objects have higher contrasts and as they get further away they become gradually lighter and less saturated; their contrast decreases and they tend to borrow the color of the background (most often sky blue) – an effect called aerial perspective.

09 Details: The painting looks a bit flat up to now, so, on a new layer set to Overlay mode, I paint some rays of light filtering through the water. It's easy to overdo light effects, so after painting them it's a good idea to turn the layer's opacity to 0 and slowly increase it until it looks right again.

In a lighting situation like this, the surface ripples would have reflected on the rocks on the bottom, so I achieve that effect using my third brush on a Color Dodge layer.

When the surface of the water is wavy, underwater light has a fragmented look, which can be difficult to capture. Using photo texture brushes is a quick and simple way to help make it look realistic.

Besides these changes, I continue to define the character's features and add details in the background of the scene.

10 Final touches: After finishing painting the character, I continue to build the textures using the same brushes I created earlier.



09

To avoid the picture getting too crowded, I paint some of the bubbles on separate layers and use the Motion Blur filter to make them fade into the background.

I add a few other small details, like the corals and some aquatic plants in the foreground, on which I apply the Lens Blur filter. The 'realism' of a painting can often be enhanced by a good balance between soft and hard edges, which imitate a photo's depth of field.

The composition finally looks balanced, so I decide that this will be my final image. ●

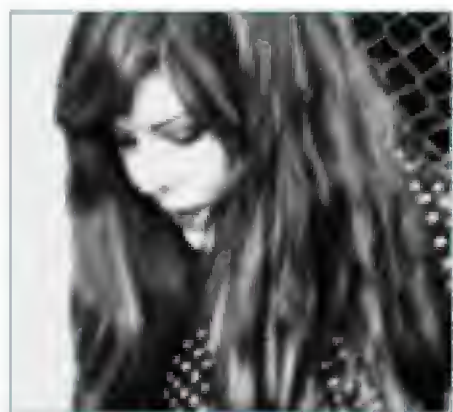
06 Initial sketch

07 Painting in a sense of movement

08 Adding depth to the image

09 Using the photo texture brush to add realistic detail

The Artist



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The Artist



Byzwa Dher

artofbyz.com

Software Used:

Photoshop

Byz, a.k.a. Byzwa Dher, is a freelance digital artist from Slovakia. He specializes in concept art and illustration for characters and environment.

Learn to paint atmospheric scenes

Freelance digital artist, Byzwa Dher walks us through the Photoshop process for his image *End of Mountain*, using color and light to create an atmospheric fantasy scene ▶



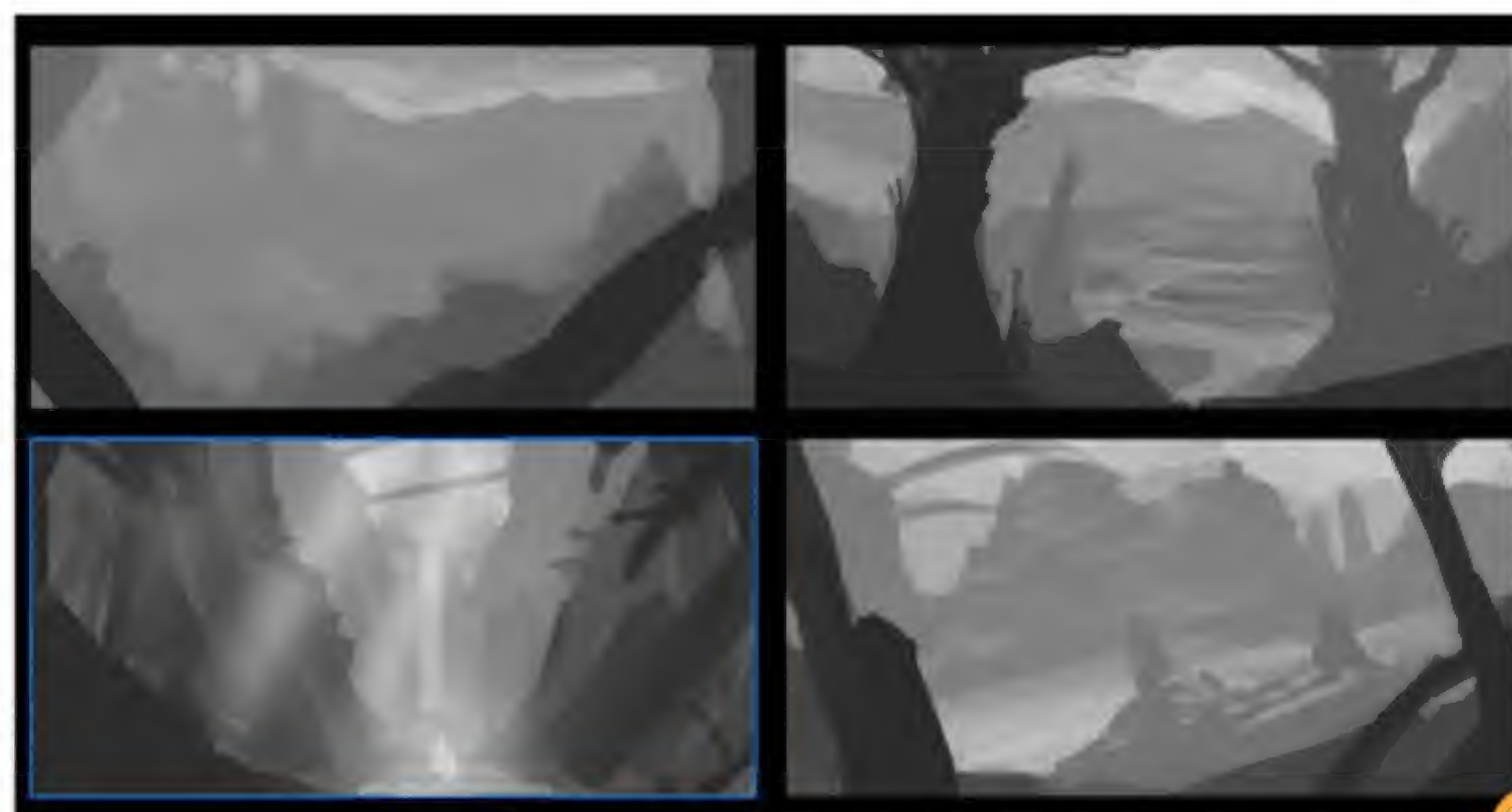
"END OF MOUNTAIN"

Discover techniques to speed up your painting process when creating fantasy scenes...

This project overview will focus on the creation of a fantasy scene. I'll write about my technique for the faster creation of an environment concept, where my main objective was to generate an atmosphere for the viewer.

When I start, I don't have any special thoughts on what the final image will look like. My method involves starting the drawing process by analyzing a certain theme. I collect all the facts and ideas I want present in the image before starting the drawing.

For this piece I chose a fantasy scene, and made some notes about the features I wanted to show in my image. I wanted to feature some mountains, a canyon, some magic lights, a sun and a character who provides the narrative or storyline for the piece, allowing the viewer to



01

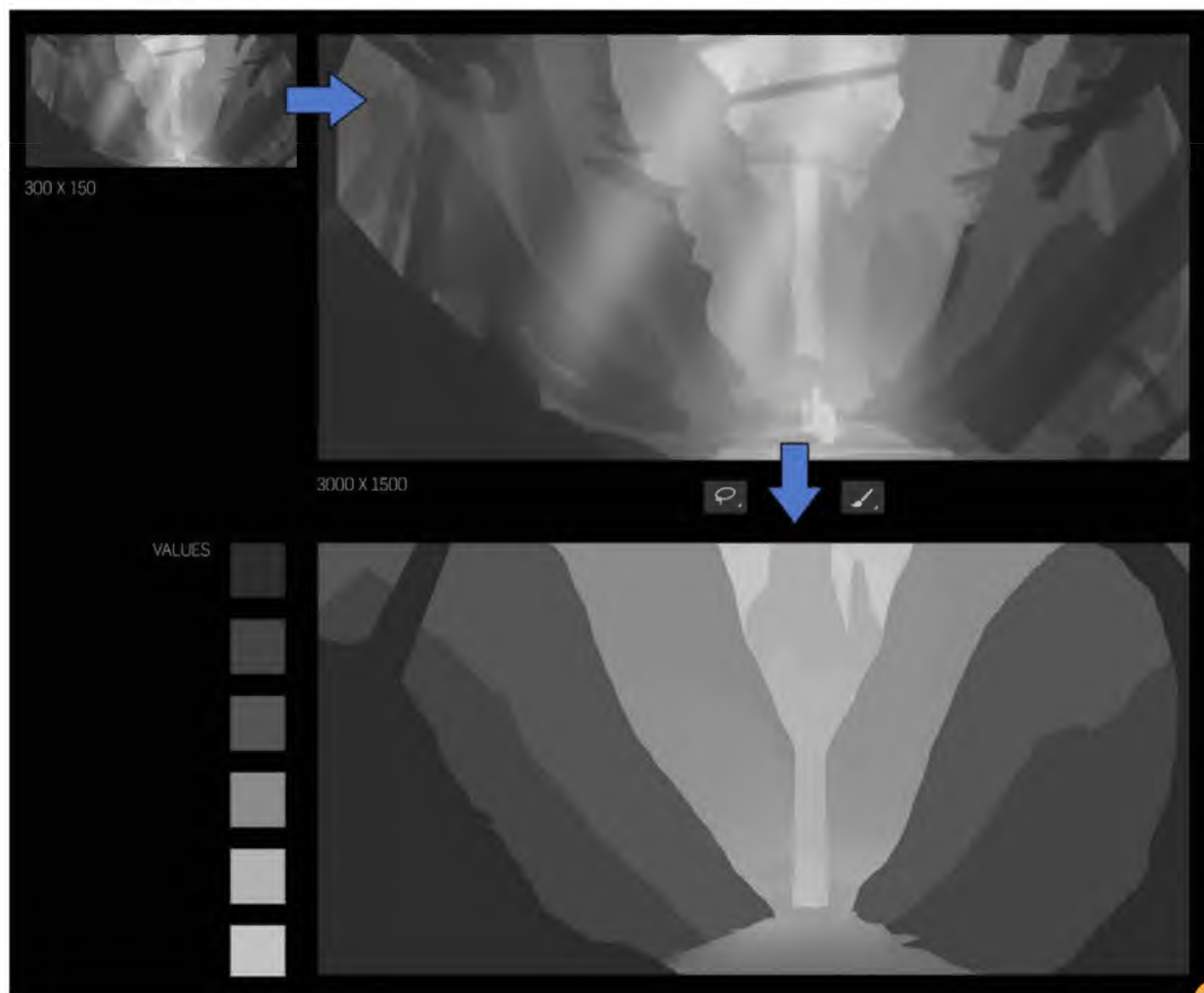
create his own story about it. I was inspired by the references from my visual library that I collected to help start this image.

01 Thumbnails: After analyzing the ideas, I went on to visualizing the composition.

The fastest way for me to start was to make thumbnail drafts. I made some layouts in a low

resolution (roughly 300 x 150 pixels) because you don't need that much time to make small images. I didn't paint details, just a quick sketchy layout of the composition. I took five minutes for each of the layouts.

02 Basic shapes: From the thumbnails, I chose the one that was most interesting



02

“For easier working I tried to organize layers into the groups from the very beginning, to allow me to locate components easily”

for me. My decision was No. 3, as I liked the atmosphere of the canyon and the idea of an entrance to a new country. At this point, I had the idea to incorporate perhaps the itinerant nature of the character, who is passing the gate at the end of the mountains.

After choosing the thumbnail, I added an extra 3,000 pixels of resolution. With the Lasso tool I started to quickly trace the single shapes from the layout. I focused on the values, which is important to achieve depth in a picture, where shapes closer to the camera have a bigger contrast than those in the distance. I used just six shades, and made sure not to use either 100-percent black or 100-percent white.

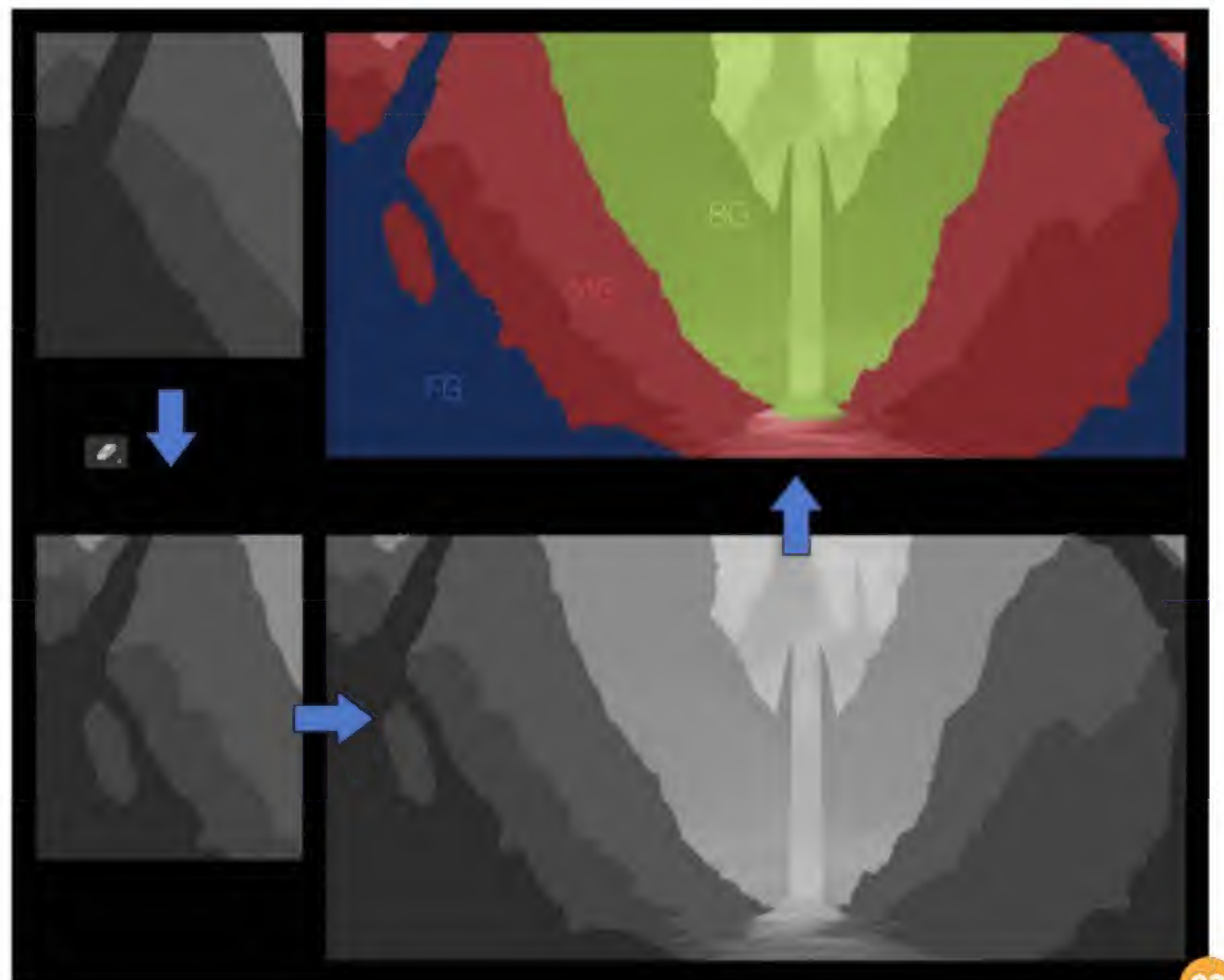
03 Defining shapes: I put every single different shade for each shape in a different layer. I then focused on adding detailed definition for the configuration of the shape. With the Erase tool, with a hardness of 100-percent, I created the outline of mountains. It was important to make sure every single shape was really well drawn, because they were used as templates for the textures in the next step.

For easier working I tried to organize layers into the groups from the very beginning, to allow me to locate components easily. I divided the project into the basic layers of environment composition: foreground, middle-ground and background.

04 Textures: After finishing the outlines of the shapes, I collected photos with nice textures. For a better image, I chose my own photos that I took in the mountains on my holidays. To create the single textures, I added it to single shapes and affixed them with a clipping mask on each layer.

I adjusted the value of every texture with levels and color balance for the concrete layer. When I had a whole scene covered with brushstrokes, I painted the details of textures. I used the standard Chalk brush and a rock texture brush.

05 Basic colors: In this step I will write about colors. I tried to cover the whole scene with my own scale of colors adjusted to my own vision. I decided on a clear sun lighting set-up for my scene, so I used a warmer shade for the light to complement and contrast with the colder shades of shadows. ►



03



04

01 A selection of the thumbnails

02 Blocking out the basic shapes and assigning values to create depth

03 Organizing the scene into fore, mid and background groups

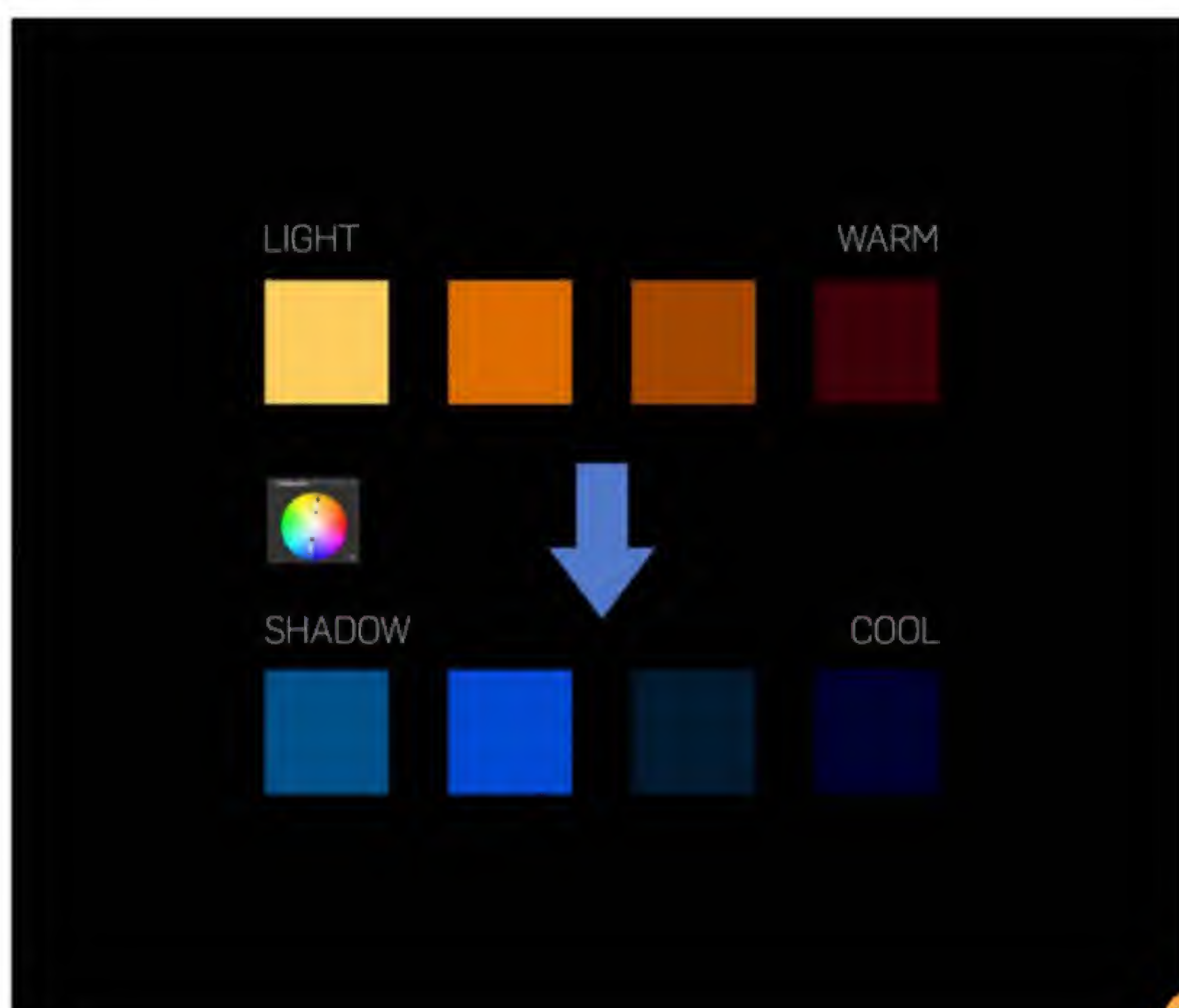
04 Adding in the texture using his own photographs

I like to use Photoshop's extension Kuler, where you can really easily create a color palette. I created layers with the Overlay blending mode, which gives a single area of the image the shade of color I need.

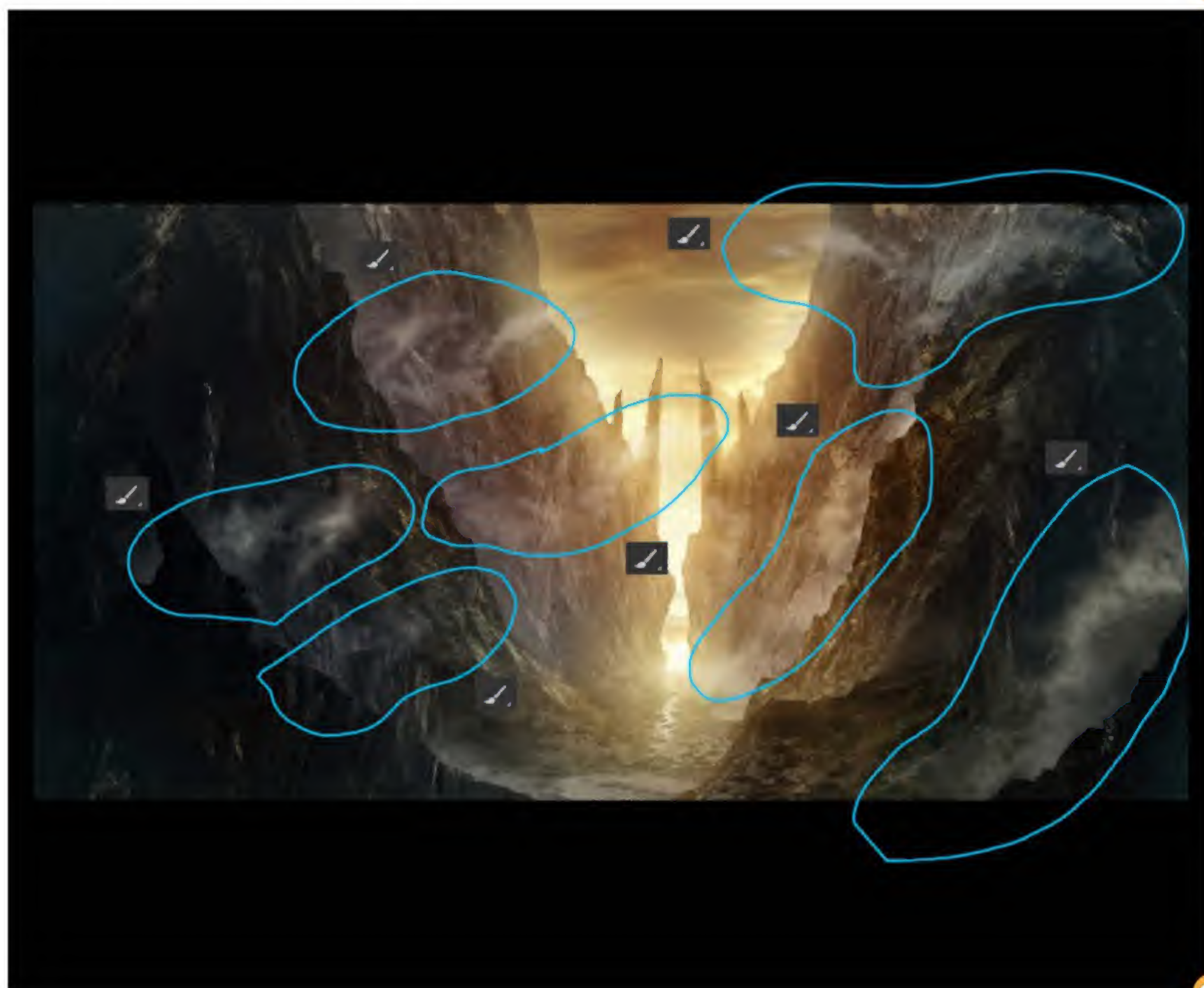
06 Atmosphere: After adjusting the colors of the scene, I added fragments, which helped the scene look a little photorealistic. With the Clouds brush I added brighter color shapes, reminiscent of steam or smoke. This indication of a stream of air added a little bit of dynamic to the scene.

07 Defining the light: I decided that the source of light would come from the gate at the end of mountains. It was backlit where the light comes to the viewer, so it was really important to catch where the light hits the objects in the scene.

In the layers in Linear Dodge blend mode, I added the brighter colors for the image highlights, concentrating around the border shapes and in



05



06

“It was really important to find the right scale of ambiance for the character. As I wanted the canyon to look majestic, the character had to be small in comparison”

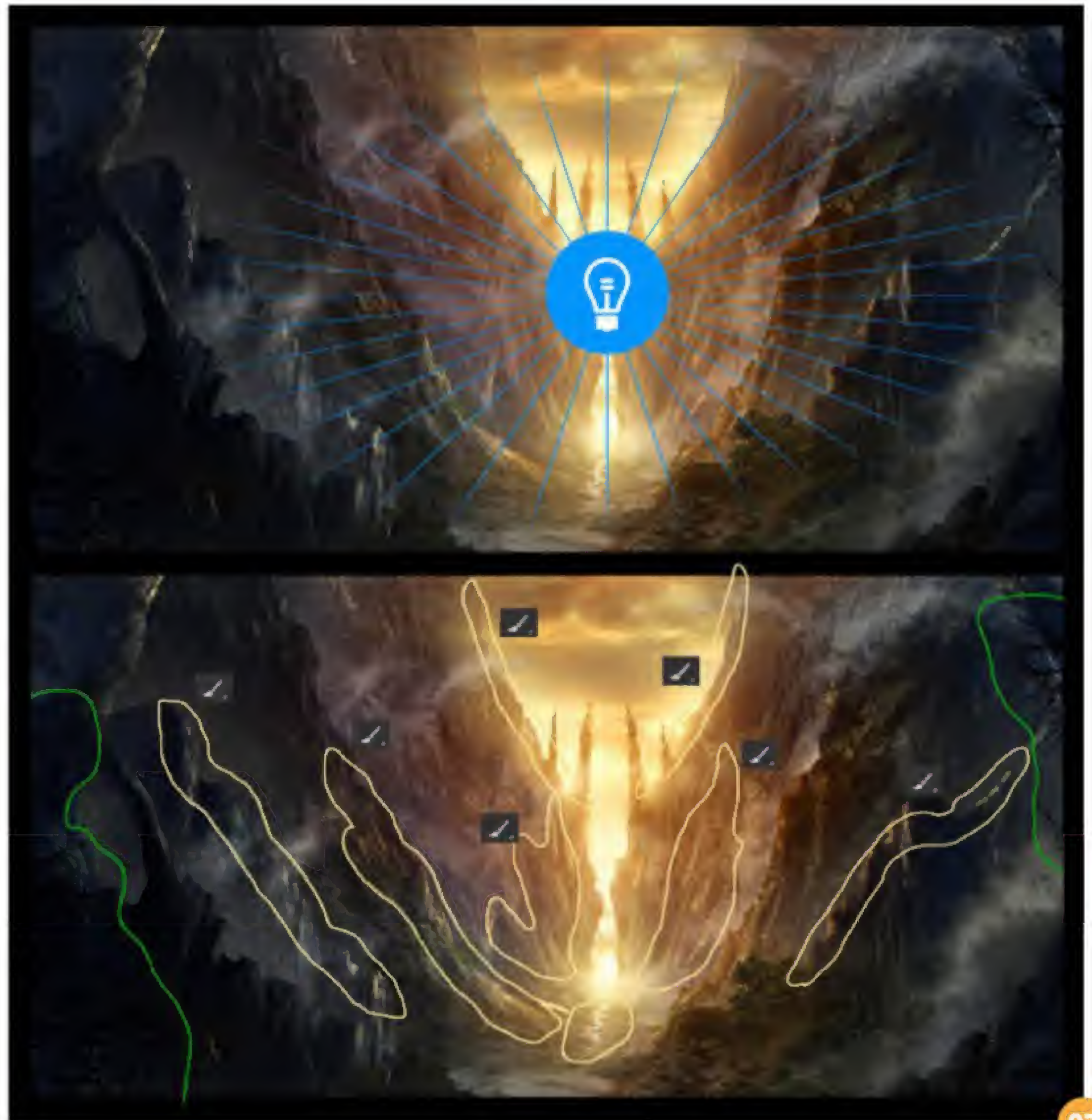
the river. I added the tree shapes in the corners of the image to define the elements of the darker parts, because they looked a little bit boring. I added some architecture near the gate which I color adjusted.

08 Adding the character: It was then time to add a hero, which, as I mentioned earlier, would give the storyline. I prepared the outline of the shape, and then in the clipping layer, I painted details of the helmet and so on.

It was really important to find the right scale of ambiance for the character. As I wanted the canyon to look majestic, the character had to be small in comparison. I added a drop shadow again to define the light

09 Color corrections: The image was then in its final phase – the color correction. Here I didn’t use anything special. I used Levels for higher contrast, and then the Lens correction filter and Color balance to define the colors. And as a last step I defined the brushstroke with the Smart sharpen filter.

Painting the scene from my mind like this was a lot of fun for me, and I’m glad I’m able to share that process with you. I hope that my techniques were interesting and will help you in your future digital work. ●



07 Choosing a warm color palette to contrast with the cold tones in the shadows

07 Defining the light source and adding a back light and rim lighting

08 Adding steam or smoke to the scene to create dynamic

08 Outlining the silhouette of the character and fitting it to the scene

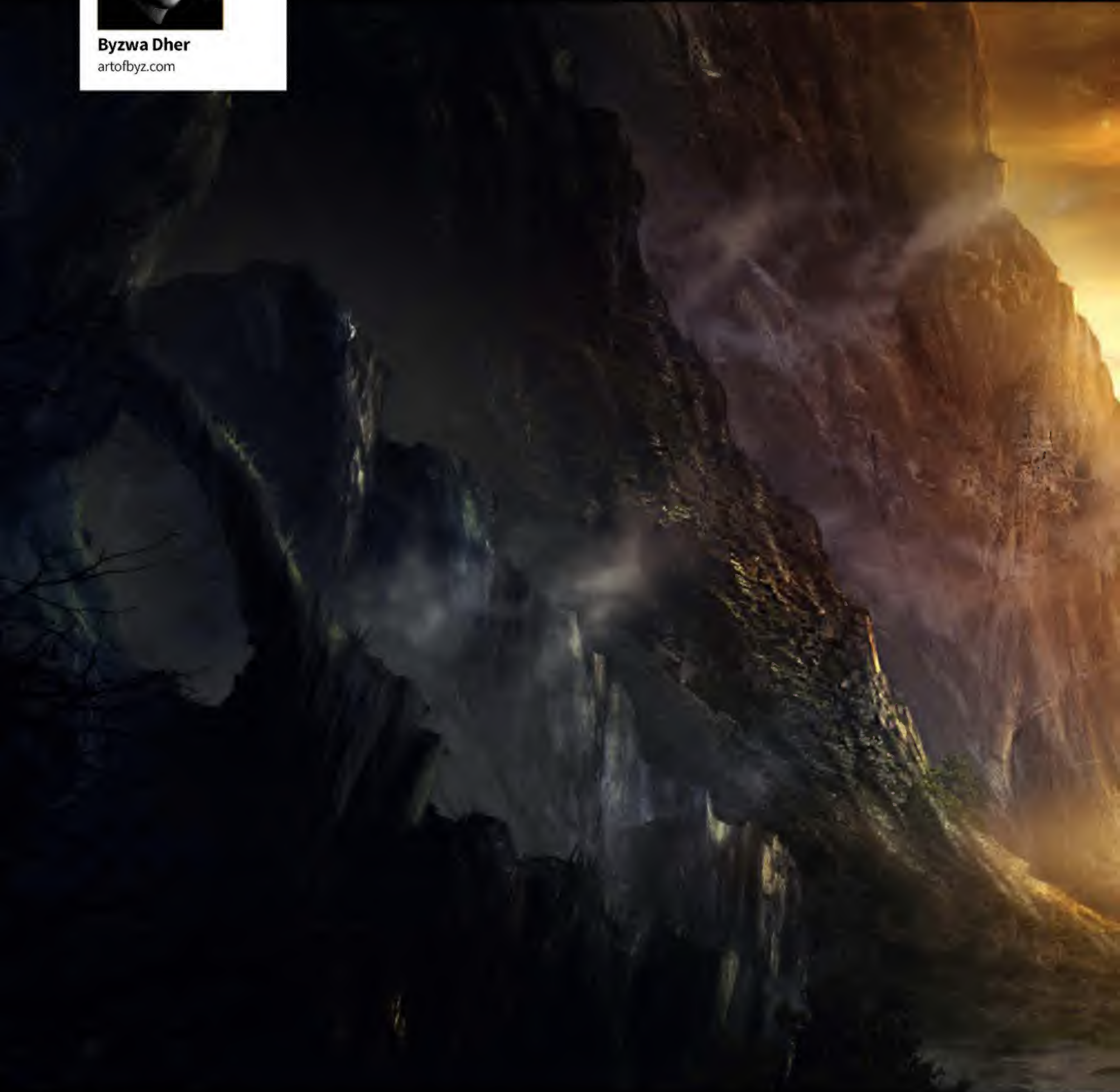


08

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Software Used:

Photoshop

Bio:

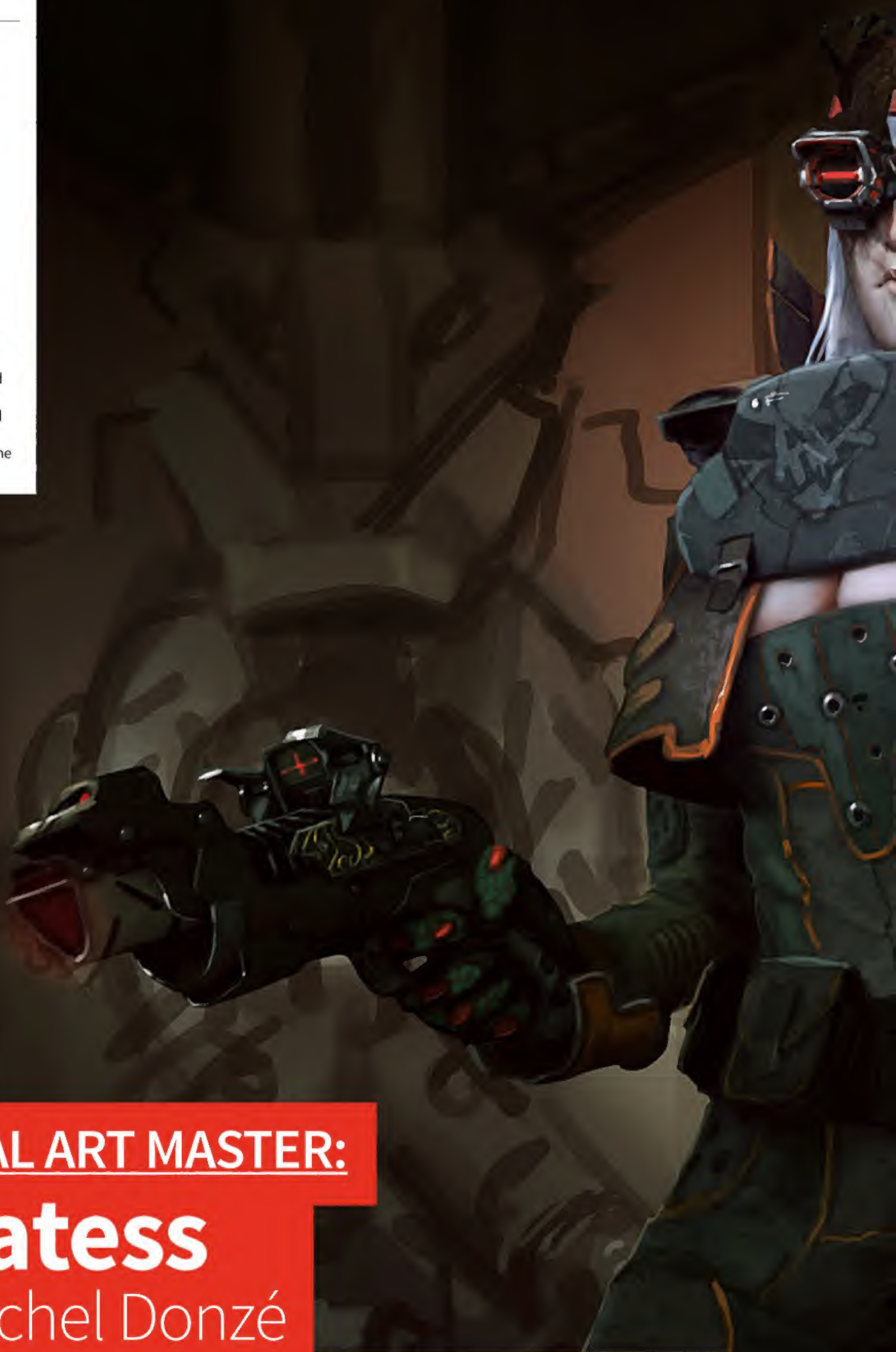
Michel Donzé is a French freelance illustrator/concept artist. He studied 3D animation and VFX at Georges Méliès School and has previously worked for Ubisoft Paris, Applibot and macrograph. Michel loves creating stuff, regardless the technique or media!

DIGITAL ART MASTER:

Piratess

by Michel Donzé

Discover the processes behind Michel Donzé's cool character image, *Piratess* with a sneak-peek look inside the pages of *Digital Art Masters: Volume 8* 





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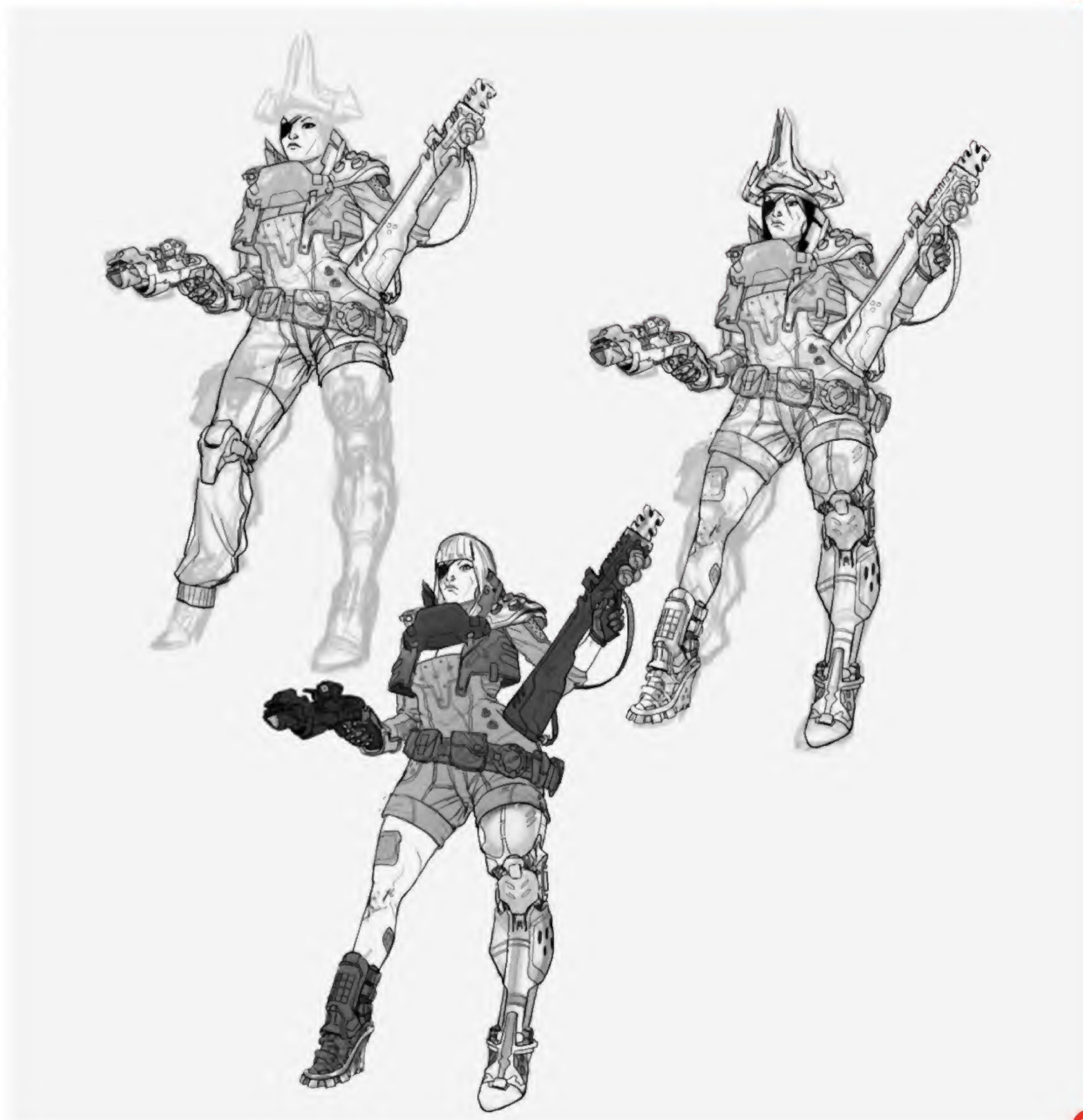
Introduction

This illustration was made when I entered one of CGHub's online challenges – CharacterForge2d – which focused heavily on the character design and personality.

The brief was to design a pirate ship captain from the distant future. She had to be between thirty and forty, set on a future Earth filled with brigands, armies and mercenaries. She had to be crafty, smart and resourceful, and have a good body: "She has had a hard life living in space, but she always gets what she wants."



01



02



03

I thought she would look great with a costume that had a slight military look – hand-crafted and asymmetrical. Like all good captains, she has lost a leg and an eye in battle, only to be replaced by futuristic prosthetics. I was heavily influenced by the art of the game *Rage* for the details and combination of the mech parts in conjunction with an organic quality.

Concept sketch

I made a first draft on paper, trying to work out proportions for her body and give her a strong, self-affirmed pose. Then I kept switching from ArtStudio on the iPad to Photoshop, developing the design while trying to maintain a good balance of details (Fig.01). The first sketches seemed a bit weak, so I chose a lower angle view and got rid of the cape that was making the pose harder to read.

Clean sketch

I usually place a white, semi-transparent layer on top of the concept before cleaning, and use a very basic brush with Pen Pressure set to Opacity and Flow (Fig.02).

The hat looked too high and unbalanced the grounded, heavy appearance I wanted, so I made a few tests for the top of her head and decided on a design for the lost eye device (Fig.03). Her hair also became white in the process as this felt more futuristic and individual.

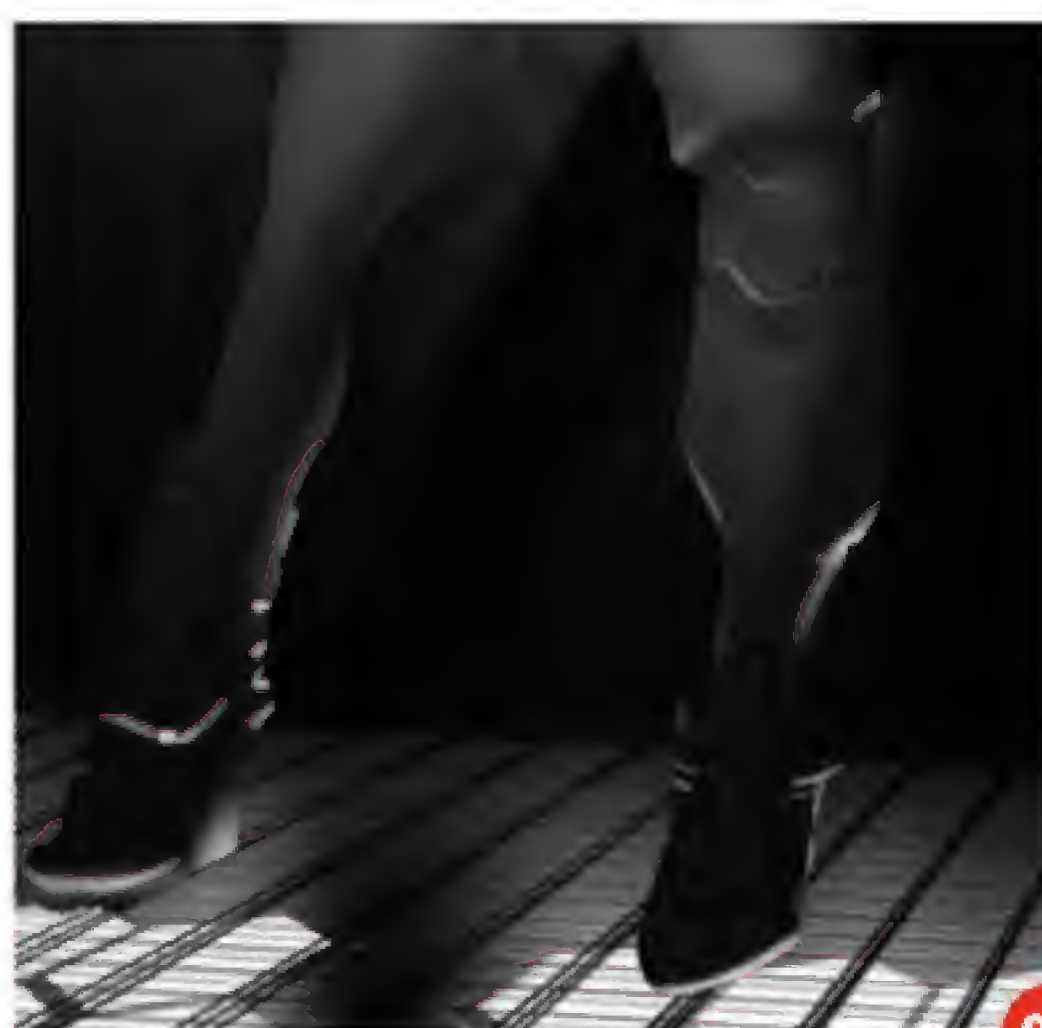
The concept sketching and cleaning processes are the most important for me. These lay down the foundations for everything that follows, so I try to spend as much time as I can experimenting with the design. I also try to get the point of view of friends and do not hesitate to restart from scratch if necessary.

Ambient occlusion painting

AO is a 3D rendering technique, often used in VFX and animation rendering workflow to add realism. It creates the effect of a very diffuse white lighting. The closer two surfaces are to each other, the less light they will receive with the overall effect being somewhat similar to that of an overcast gray day.



04

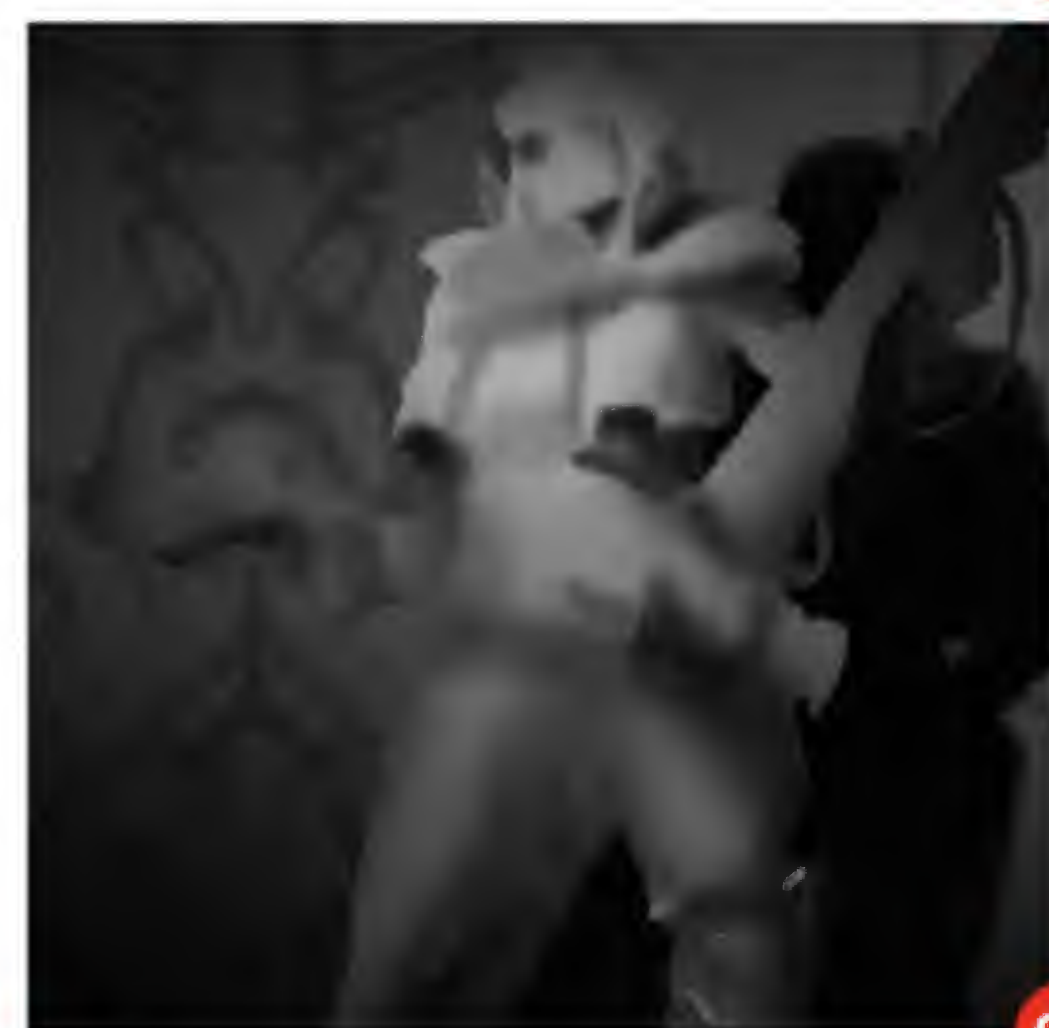


05

For this piece, I experimented by building the picture in a 3D style, akin to compositing passes (Fig.04). I painted an AO pass from scratch using a very soft brush, selection tools and an eraser, which took a few hours.

Preparing the base

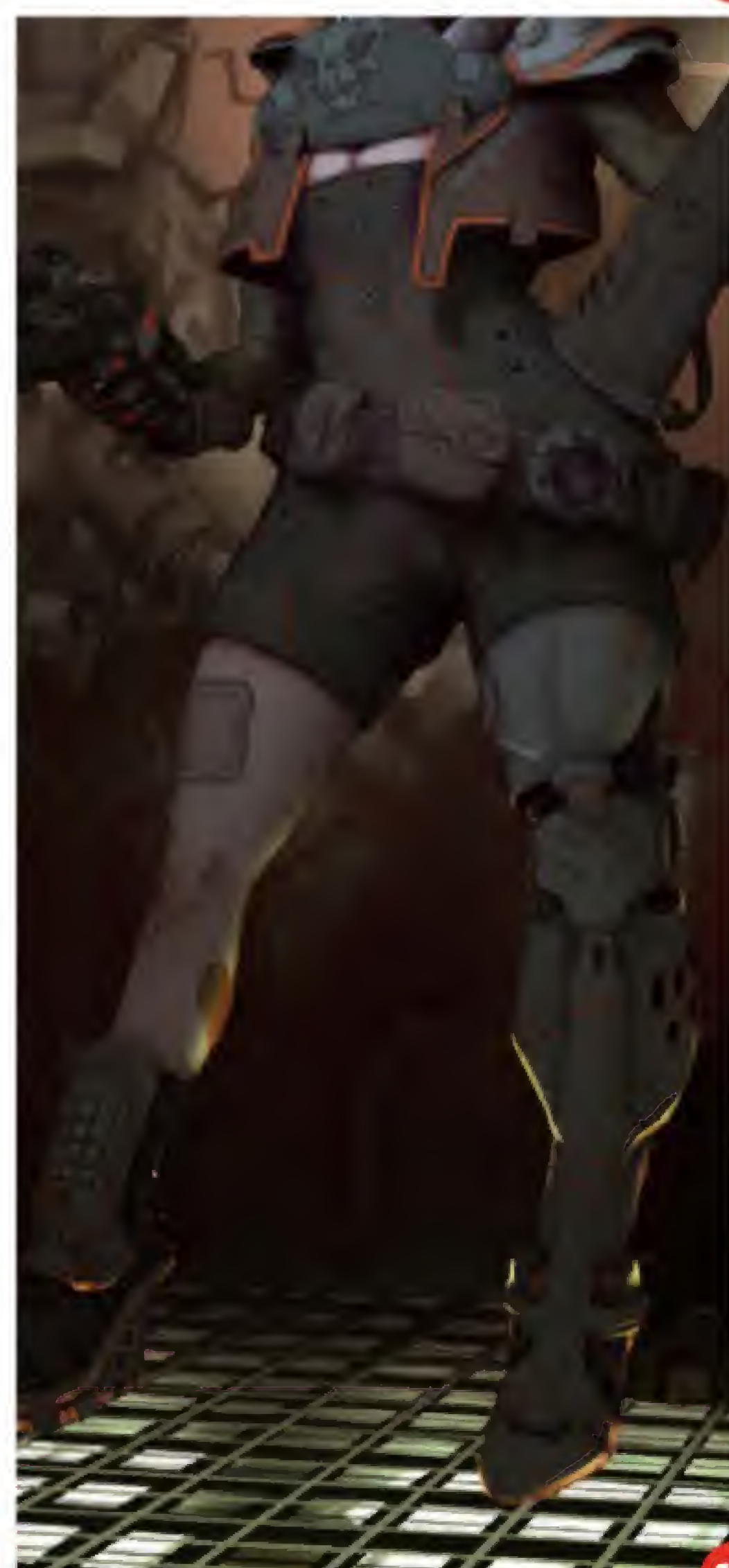
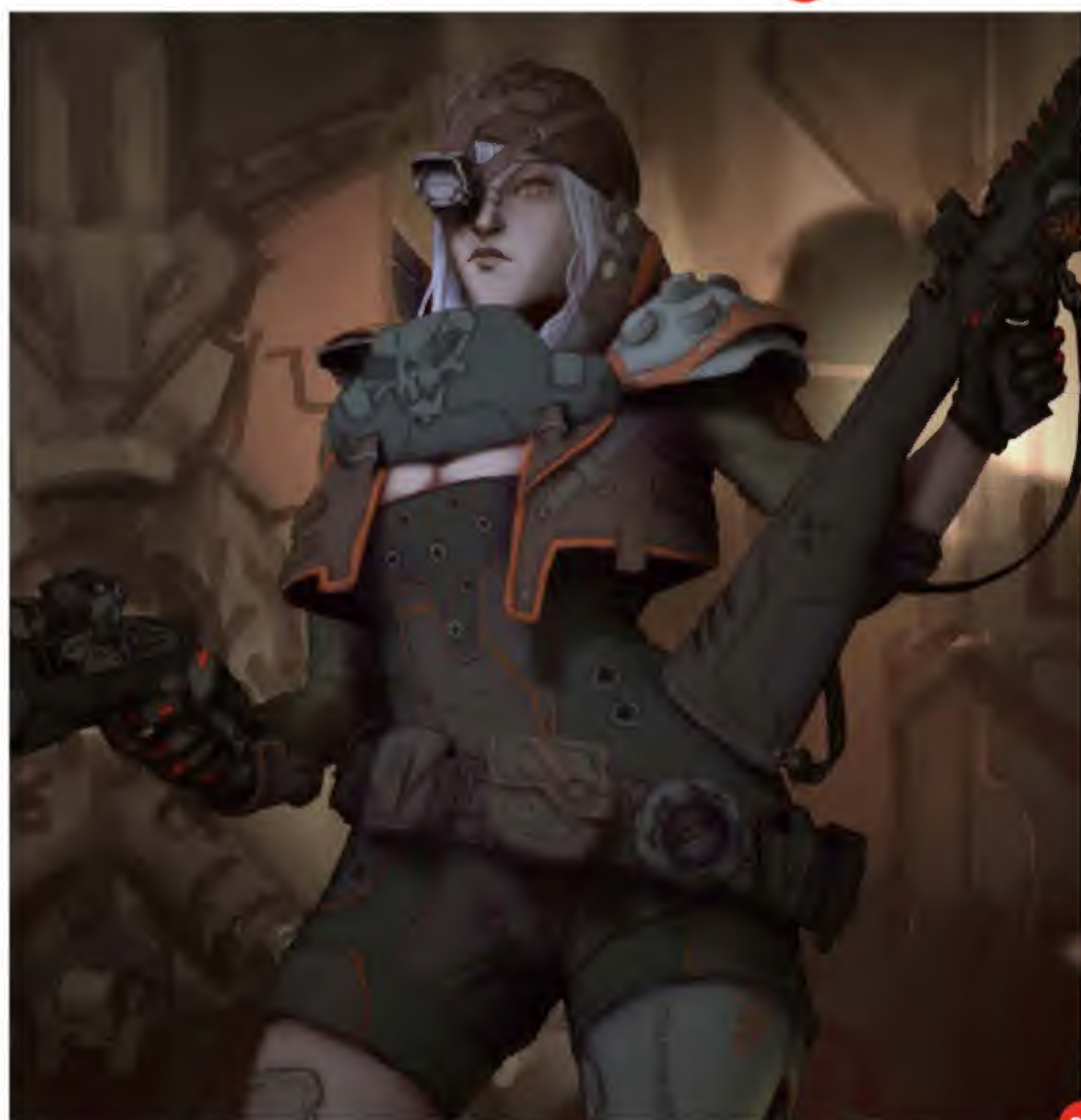
I first made a rough background using custom brushes and Free Transform to create the



06

perspective on the ground. I also decided on the lighting: the key light would be a spot pointed at her head, with another light coming from beneath the grid (Fig.05 – 06).

At this point I started blocking out the flat colors for each material, separating them by layer so that I could quickly test the color harmony using the Hue/Saturation adjustment. It also



allowed for easy selection later by Ctrl-and-clicking on the layer thumbnail (Fig.07).

The final key light was repainted with a big, soft Radial gradient and then I used a mask to paint the shadow areas (Fig.08). The areas of flat color made previously proved useful here to quickly select parts. This made it easy to select the rifle, for example, and then paint a very soft, rounded shadow with a big blurry brush without affecting the nearby arm and thigh.

I used basic passes in terms of a 3D approach: diffuse color, ambient occlusion and two light sources. I later added a darkening layer on top of the flat colors and the AO to create the fully shaded version.

The AO was separated into skin and non-skin (using a quick selection on the flat colors to make the mask); the skin being less pronounced and redder. They were then colorized using the Hue/Saturation adjustment layers with the Colorize option checked.

The two lights were added using the Color Dodge blending mode. This is a good way to add light while retaining the contrast, whereas Lighten, Screen and Add would wash out the model. Finally the line sketch was reintroduced in Overlay mode, with a red tint and a mask to hide areas exposed to the light (Fig.09 - 10).

Repainting

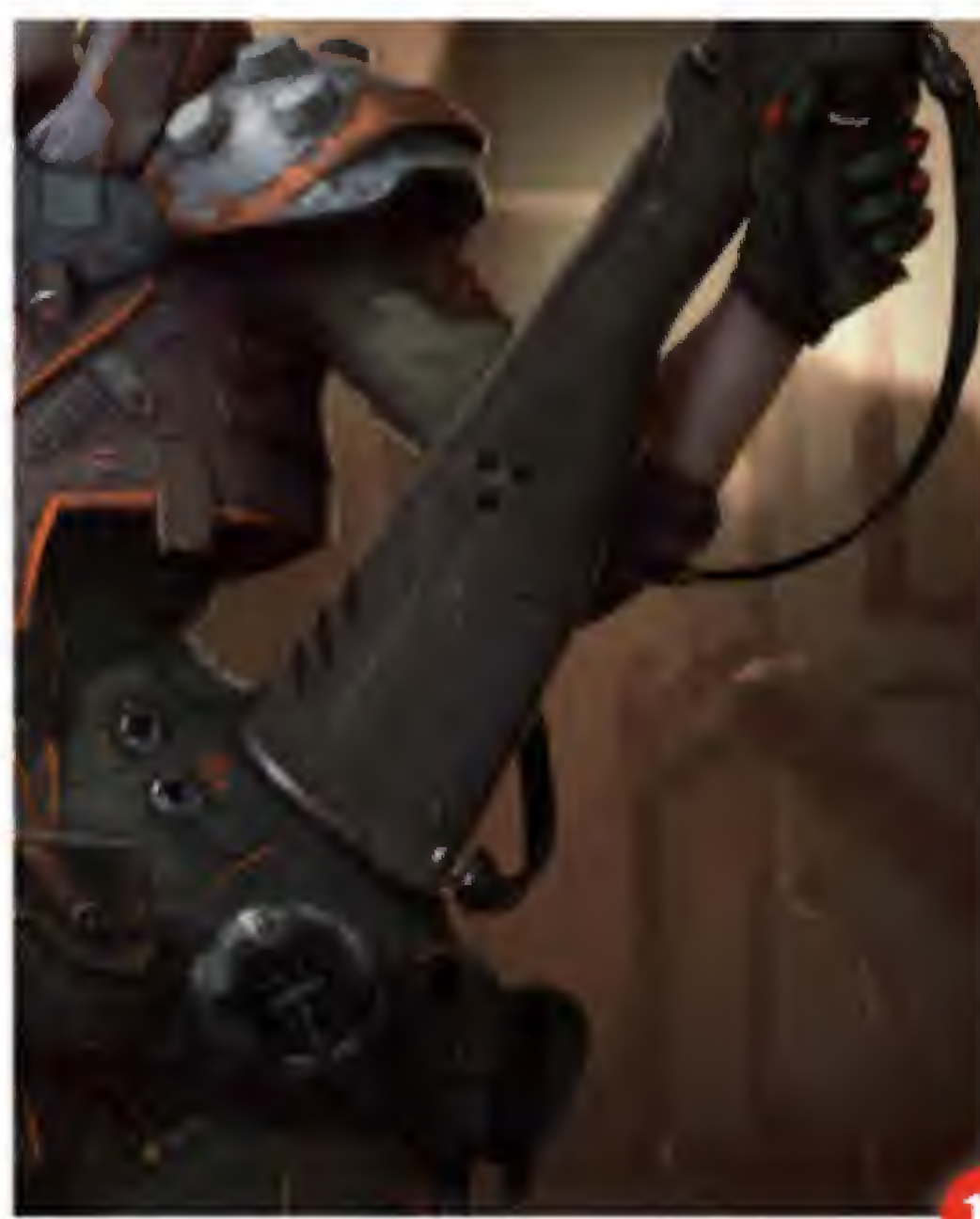
The next stage in the painting process involved a mix of using textured brushes, set to Soft Light/Overlay layers, to add dirt and texture to her costume and mechanical leg. The rest involved basic painting including highlights, refining the skin shading and adding soft reflections across the cloth (Fig.11). Finally, I spent some time painting the head, which became the main focal point (Fig.12 - 13).

Final touch-ups

I used Curves to make her a little greener so that she would stand out against the red background. I then added the stereotypical, futuristic incandescent lines on the mechanical leg and guns (Fig.14). To improve the composition and mood, I also added smoke rising from the ground, a foreground element and a few color-correction layers to adjust the contrast and hues.

Conclusion

I was happy with the result and it seems the people who voted for me to win the CGHub challenge were too, I guess! As for the technique, the 3D workflow approach for rendering a 2D concept was very useful. Considering the



11



12



13



14

amount of detail I was going for, this approach made painting everything and getting a realistic rendering faster and easier. However, working this

way felt very technical and academic, and not as artistic and spontaneous as I would like my work to be.

The Artist



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